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ABSTRACT

This theme issue of "Bildung und Wissenschaft" explains the importance of multilingualism in today's world, focusing on foreign language instruction in Germany. It examines the following issues: "Multilingualism in a Changing World"; "The Significance of Foreign Languages for Germany"; "Foreign Languages in Schools: The System--A Few Basic Facts"; "The Hamburg Agreement"; "Exchanges and Encounters"; "Foreign Languages and 'Bildung'"; "Guidelines: The Official and Secret Curriculum"; "New Approaches to Foreign Language Teaching"; "The Expectations of the Customers"; "Foreign Language Teaching in Vocational Schools"; "Bilingual Curricula and Bilingual Lessons"; "An Early Start"; "Teacher Training"; "Further Training for Teachers"; "Multilingualism and the Position of English"; "EU Programmes: Their Impact on Foreign Language Teaching"; "Correction and Assessment: Grades, Examinations, and Control of Standards"; and "In Conclusion." (SM)

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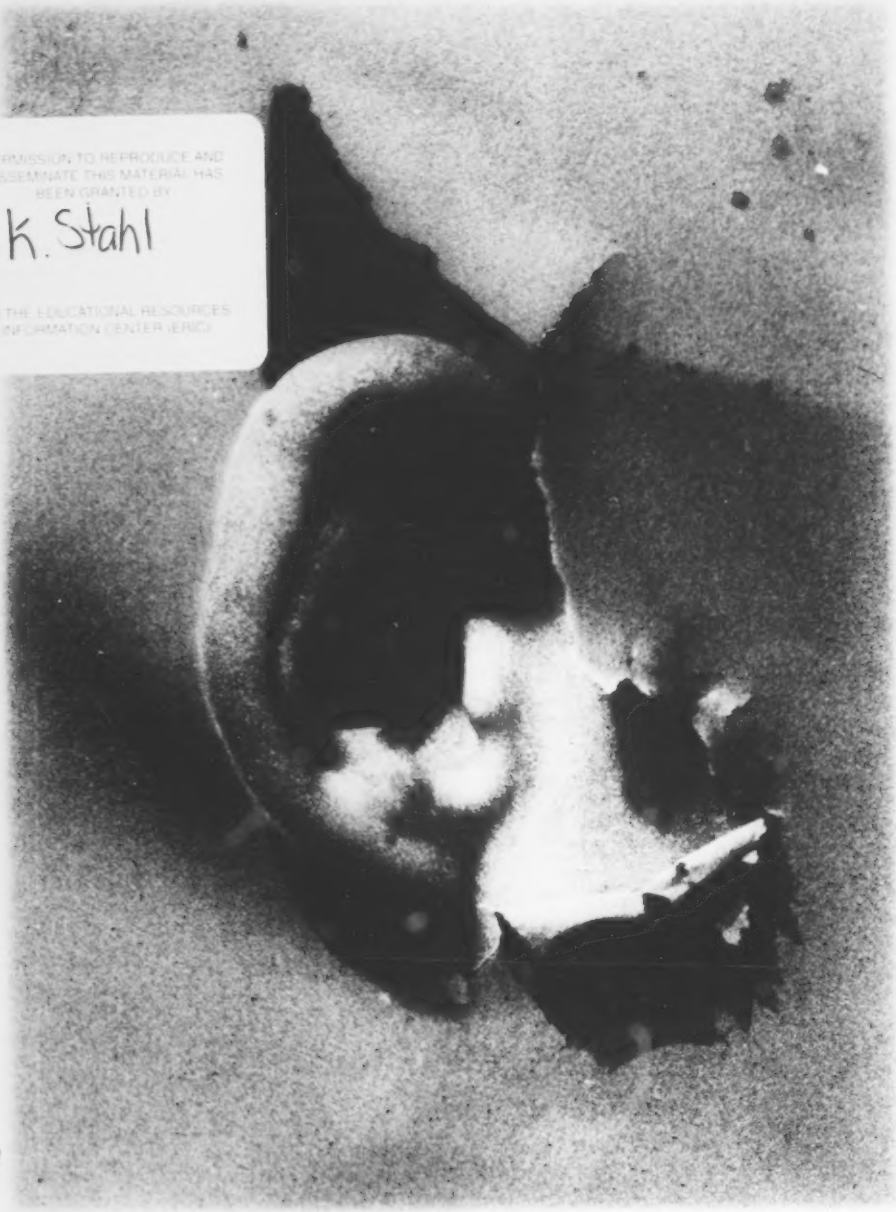

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Foreign language teaching in Germany

Multilingualism in Europe

Guidelines and the school system

Bilingual classes

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English as a lingua franca

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN GERMANY

Ulrich Bliesener

A knowledge of foreign languages is not only the basic precondition for understanding foreign cultures in general, but has also become a virtually indispensable tool in everyday life. The leading place where languages are taught and learned is still the school. How to teach languages has been the subject of heated debate between experts and practitioners for many years. The author of the following issue of "Education and Science" attempts to make an interim assessment of this discussion. His vigorous plea for multilingualism also documents the great significance attached to teaching foreign languages in Germany today.

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Multilingualism in a changing world

In Germany, language teaching has always been a core area of education. In the past, the ancient languages of Latin and Greek formed an essential part of general education and preparations for university studies. Modern languages, especially English and French, were regarded as a useful contribution towards everyday life more than towards higher education. English or French grammar was treated like Latin grammar: the students conjugated and declined, they learned English and French in order to read the great works of literature – not primarily to communicate, but rather to show that modern languages are also a source of learning.

After the Second World War, modern languages, and particularly English, rapidly gained in importance, not only because of the practical benefits, but because they enabled West Germany to become part of the international community. Correspondingly, the curriculum guidelines stated that the political achievements of the United Kingdom and the United States should form a key section of the content of English teaching.

The educational reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, which aimed to give equal opportunities to everyone in society, also had an impact on foreign language teaching. All children, irrespective of school grade or school type, were to learn a modern foreign language.

The dramatic changes of the last decade, the fall of the Iron Curtain and the opening of the borders in Europe, the migratory movements (in particular of labour and refugees), the process of European unification, cooperation in European and international organisations, and globalisation, have made the ability to communicate in languages other than one's mother tongue a key skill. The ability to express one's own interests, attitudes and values fluently in a foreign language and to understand and correctly assess those of others has thus become an indispensable element of every education.

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This applies generally, to competing for a job on the European labour market, to expanding one's own opportunities in life via the freedom to travel and work abroad, and to widening one's own horizons through the experience of the cultural achievements of other peoples. In this way, one gains insights into values, philosophies and lifestyles which differ from one's own. Such insights have actually become necessary if one is to play a full part not only abroad, but also at home, as migration makes society more of an ethnic mix. These changes have resulted in new ideas in language teaching. For example, the Council of Europe has developed an overall concept for foreign language teaching *(Modern Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, A Common European Framework of Reference*, Strasbourg 1996); the schools committee of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany commissioned an expertise *(On foreign language teaching in Germany – situation and proposals for further development)*, which was published in October 1994 along with thoughts about a fundamental concept for foreign language teaching. Since then, commissions have been formed in the *Länder* to look into new curricula for foreign language teaching and to search for new approaches for more appropriate and future-oriented teaching, without losing sight of tried and tested methods.

The vital point is that foreign language abilities have ceased to be the distinctive mark of an intellectual elite, which alone was permitted access to other cultures. Every individual is to be given the opportunity to learn other languages and thus to step beyond the limits of his own culture and to encounter other cultures. Foreign languages have thus now attained the rank of a cultural technique like reading, writing or arithmetic.

The schools, and particularly the foreign language classes, have to cope with these changes. The "European dimension" is not just a nice concept invented by the European Union, but is already a reality. A key element of this European dimension is the variety of languages and cultures, which must shape the European future on a basis of equality, both by retaining and cherishing cultural differences and simultaneously by developing a European identity. This cannot succeed in the form of one language for all; instead, we need multilingualism at as many levels as possible. Multilingualism has already become an important precondition for people to take advantage of freedom of movement and freedom of establishment in Europe.

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The significance of foreign languages for Germany

More than other countries in Europe, Germany relies on people who can communicate not only in their own mother tongue but also in other languages. Its geographical position, with Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Poland and the Czech Republic as its direct neighbours, its many close links with Italy (and with Greece, although this has not encouraged all that many people to learn modern Greek), the community with the countries around the Baltic Sea, the significance of Russia for Germany, the consequences deriving from its historical, and often unfortunate, common past with its neighbours (particularly France and Poland), and in very general terms the way its commercial life and its prosperity depend on exports, but also respect for the achievements of other cultures: all these factors make it necessary for people to be able to communicate with others, beyond mere commercial interests. It is not simply a question of marketing and selling – speaking "the customer's language" – but of exchanging ideas, experience and values, without which there can be no trusting cooperation between the nations. People can only understand each other if, through a familiarity with the other language, they have grasped the different perspective on the world and how it compares with their own views. Without a knowledge and understanding of others, one remains isolated in the world.

This has substantially changed the demand for foreign languages and means that the schools must create the conditions for wider, and in some cases different, learning of foreign languages. The schools are responding to this, albeit not always with sufficient urgency. But there are still vital attempts which point in the right direction: a greater focus on practical language, early teaching of foreign languages, bilingual teaching in some secondary schools, self-determined learning, ideas about lateral language acquisition, and so on: these are all ideas which apply generally to the current situation of foreign language teaching in Germany.

Foreign languages in schools: the system – a few basic facts

(The school system was described in detail in Education and Science 1/1998.)

1. In addition to the fundamental principles of democracy and the rule of law, federalism is a basic part of Germany's constitution. Both the Federal state and the *Länder* have sovereign rights. It is important to understand this, because under the constitutional arrangements of the Basic Law, education, science and culture are the sole responsibility of the *Länder;* they are an expression of their sovereignty. Educational and cultural policy are the only areas in which the *Länder* are sovereign and in which they can express their particular historical, geographical, political and social characteristics. At the same time, the *Länder* share a responsibility for the state as a whole. This overall responsibility entitles them to cooperate amongst themselves, but also obliges them to collaborate with the Federal Government. It is only fair to point out that the rights of the *Länder,* even in the sphere of education, have been undermined by acquired or derived responsibilities, e.g. by the provision of Federal funding for innovative projects. Also, the sum of the *Länder* is not a homogeneous whole, but is divided into north-south, east-west and A and B *Länder* (A = SPD-governed, B = CDU-governed), whereby all sorts of conflicting interests in the field of education can impede agreement amongst the *Länder* themselves, as well as their cooperation with the Federal Government. As the Federal Government is permitted by the constitution to represent Germany in its external relations, it demands the right to do so in Brussels in the field of educational and cultural affairs. On the other hand, Article 23 of the Basic Law states that a *Land* minister can represent the member state in Brussels. It is true to say that there is a permanent dispute about responsibilities between the Federal and *Länder* levels. At the same time, without the agreement of the *Länder* or of a particular *Land*, the Federal Government cannot do anything for schools in general or for a specific school. For example, the Federal Foreign Languages Competition, which is largely directed and funded by the Federal Government, would hardly be able to function properly without the voluntary involvement of the *Länder*.

2. Following a four-year period for all children (six years in Berlin and Brandenburg) at a *Grundschule*, the curricula at secondary level are divided between different types of school, with different leaving certificates and entitlements. In most *Länder*, the secondary schools are divided into *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, *Gymnasium* and *Gesamtschule*, with the *Sonderschule* for those with severe learning difficulties. There are also differences in the various *Länder*, such as the support level, the orientation level, the school centre, the expanded *Realschule*, the integrated *Haupt- und Realschule*, the *Wirtschaftsschule*. Some of these are simply traditional forms of education going under a different, *Land*-specific, name; some of them are substantially different. In certain *Länder*, the orientation level exists as a discrete organisational form, with the decision on the future education of the child not being taken until the end of the sixth grade.

3. The ministries of education and science of the *Länder* are the highest *Länder* authorities for education, science and culture. They develop the policy guidelines for these fields, they adopt legal and administrative provisions (e.g. acts on schools) stipulating the organisational form of the school (types of school, total length of schooling, number of lessons per subject and per week, teacher training) and the content of the courses, as well as the objectives of the lessons. The general educational objectives are fleshed out in guidelines and curricula. The ministries also supervise the teachers at public schools, and authorise the textbooks and materials permitted for use in the schools. All the *Länder* have their own research institutions for schools, universities and further education, which are supported by the ministries. Ten of the *Länder* have separate ministries for science and research; in the others, schools, science and culture are dealt with by a single ministry.

4. The rules governing foreign language teaching at primary level, i.e. in the *Grundschule*, vary between the *Länder*. It begins in the third grade and is a subject "sui generis" with its own teaching methods: priority on oral language, very limited teaching of reading and writing, no assessments or grades, and – a very important point – the involvement of all pupils. There is both the encounter-related language concept (situational use of language, mainly English, with French in certain *Länder*) and the results-oriented concept, in which foreign language teaching evolves out of German language teaching and is committed to prescribed objectives as the first foundations for learning a foreign language.

In the *Hauptschule* and the *Realschule*, the foreign language taught is generally English. In the *Realschule*, it is possible to opt for a second foreign language (generally French) from the seventh or eighth grade. In the *Gymnasium*, at least two foreign languages are compulsory, one of them usually being English. The Standing Conference of Education Ministers has adopted an agreement on types of schools and courses at Secondary Level I, stipulating a standard number of lessons for grades 5 to 9/10, with a number of core subjects for all types of school: German, mathematics, first foreign language, natural sciences and social sciences. At the *Gymnasium*, a second foreign language is compulsory from grade 7. The foreign language is taught in three to five 45-minute lessons a week. The second foreign language from grade 7 (compulsory or optional) is also taught in three to five lessons a week. Foreign language teaching is a compulsory element of all general education at Secondary Level I. From grade 7, foreign languages form part of the individual pupil profile in terms of the choice of subjects. Anyone aiming to obtain a *Realschule* leaving certificate must have been learning a foreign language from grade 5 on. The educational objective of the *Länder* is that every pupil will learn two foreign languages in the course of his schooling.

At *Oberstufe* level in the *Gymnasium* (Secondary Level II, grades 11-13 or, in four *Länder*, grades 10-12 or 11-12), the pupils have certain obligatory courses, but can also set individual priorities for various subjects or groups of subjects. Foreign languages fall into the group of linguistic-literary-artistic courses (German, foreign languages, art). The other course groups are a) social sciences and b) mathematics/natural sciences/technology. Following a decision by the Standing Conference of Education Ministers in 1997, German, a foreign language and mathematics have to be studied up to *Abitur* level.

5. The current demographic structure in Germany is the outcome of major population movements and migrations: 12 million displaced persons from the former German territories to the east (up to about 1950); 3.5 million ethnic Germans (many with no knowledge of German) from the eastern European countries (1950-1995); until the Berlin Wall was built in 1961, 2.7 million people came across from the former GDR; 616,000 came between 1961 and 1988, and another 390,000 after 1990. In 1997, about 7.2 million foreigners lived in Germany. The largest group in numerical terms was the Turks (28.1 %); 18.1 % hail from Yugoslavia, 25.3 % come from the member states of the European Union, with the Italians forming the strongest group at 8.2 % of the entire foreign population in Germany.

The *Länder* have put various measures in place to facilitate the integration of foreign children and adolescents, with a particular focus on helping them to learn German (preparatory classes, bilingual classes with teaching in the mother tongue and German, intensive courses in German as a foreign language, extra classes outside the curriculum). In order to preserve their cultural identity, foreign pupils can also have supplementary teaching in their mother tongue, focusing on the culture and history of their countries (up to five lessons a week).

At schools and vocational training courses, teaching normally takes place in German. There are certain exceptions to this: private

schools, bilingual schools and classes in which foreign pupils are taught in their mother tongue, e.g. for children of the Danish minority in northern Schleswig and for children of the Sorb minority in Brandenburg and Saxony. As part of the efforts to make German higher education establishments more attractive for foreign students, some institutions have begun offering certain courses in a language other than German, although this is not yet very widespread.

6. The subdivision of Germany into sixteen *Länder* explains the differences between the *Länder* in education and cultural affairs. These differences are reflected in (a) the content and length of teacher training, (b) the number of lessons per subject for the various age-groups, (c) forms of teaching, (d) the content of teaching, in the light of the orientation and the political situation, and (e) to a certain extent, the form and content of the final examinations.

The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany was set up in 1948 to ensure a basic degree of uniformity and compatibility whilst preserving Land-specific interests. At the plenary sessions (usually four a year), the decisions needed to maintain uniformity and compatibility in the educational system are taken. Since agreement always has to be unanimous, decision-making is difficult, and the development of innovative concepts tends to be characterised by the lowest common denominator or optional recommendations rather than by bold steps forward.

7. The table below gives the foreign languages taught in schools and the percentages of pupils learning them:

English	95.94%
Greek	0.25%
Italian	0.34%
Polish	0.04%
French	24.52%
Russian	5.61%
Danish	0.06%
Turkish	0.22%
Latin	10.88%
Spanish	1.02%
Dutch	0.08%
Hebrew	0.01%
Other languages (including modern Greek, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic)	0.15%

Regular meetings are held between German delegations (consisting of representatives of the Federal Foreign Office – i.e. the Federal level, and the Standing Conference of Education Ministers – i.e. the *Länder* level) and delegations from all countries whose language is taught at German schools; the intention is always to promote the teaching of the respective language.

The Hamburg Agreement

One major element of the education system in the Federal Republic of Germany is the so-called Hamburg Agreement of 28 October 1964, a revision of the Dusseldorf Agreement adopted by the Minister-Presidents of the *Länder* on 17 February 1955 in order to ensure uniformity in the reconstruction and expansion of the education system. The Standing Conference of Education Ministers had done important preparatory work towards this.

The Hamburg Agreement covers organisational aspects, and particularly the order of languages, which was made more flexible than it had been in the Dusseldorf Agreement, not least because of the Franco-German Treaty. It was now possible (albeit relatively rare) for French and Latin to be the first foreign language taught at the *Gymnasium* from grade 5, and not just English. The agreement also stipulated nine years of compulsory schooling with a possible extension of one year at the Hauptschule (to grade 10). In particular, the introduction of pilot schools at which new ideas could be tested out was made easier: this gave rise to many initiatives and created a climate in which the reform of the *Oberstufe* was possible from 1970. Not least, foreign language teaching benefited from a number of new didactic methods. Following German reunification, the Hamburg Agreement was extended to include the new *Länder*. The Hamburg Agreement acts as a sort of central arrangement for the school system, even though the responsibilities for culture and education are distributed federally.

Until the reform of the *Oberstufe* in 1972, the *Gymnasien* were categorised by the subjects they offered: a) ancient languages; b) modern languages; c) mathematics and natural sciences. To a certain extent, a difference still exists today at Secondary Level I between *Gymnasien* focusing on modern languages and those concentrating on mathematics and natural sciences. But the reform rendered the distinction arising from the conditions attached to their *Abitur* examinations irrelevant. Only the *Gymnasien* specialising in ancient languages are still listed as a special category.

Foreign languages are taught in the following order:

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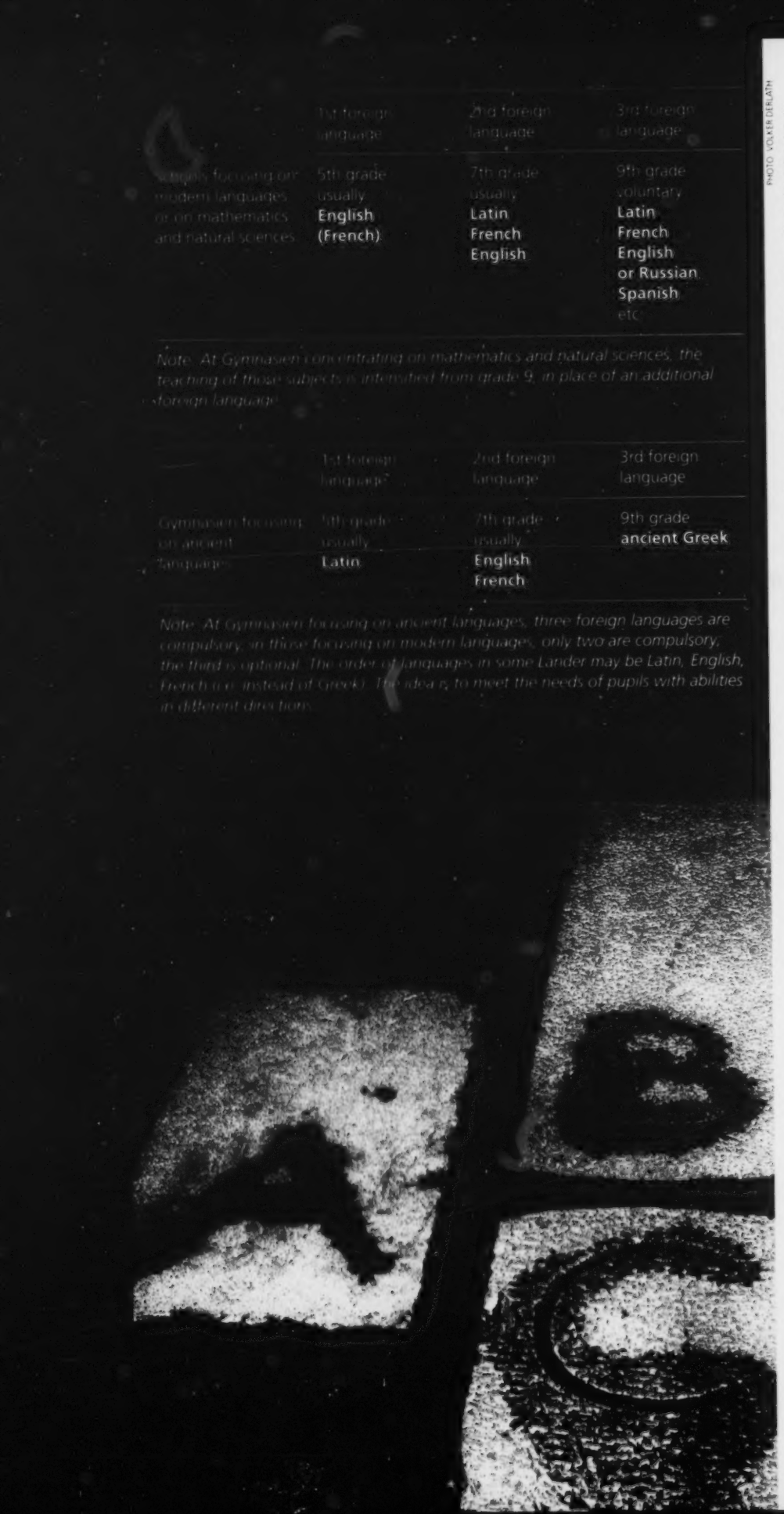
	1st foreign language	2nd foreign language	3rd foreign language
Gymnasien focusing on modern languages or on mathematics and natural sciences	5th grade usually **English** (French)	7th grade usually **Latin** **French** **English**	9th grade voluntary **Latin** **French** **English** or Russian **Spanish** etc.

Note: At Gymnasien concentrating on mathematics and natural sciences, the teaching of those subjects is intensified from grade 9, in place of an additional foreign language.

	1st foreign language	2nd foreign language	3rd foreign language
Gymnasien focusing on ancient languages	5th grade usually **Latin**	7th grade usually **English** **French**	9th grade **ancient Greek**

Note: At Gymnasien focusing on ancient languages, three foreign languages are compulsory; in those focusing on modern languages, only two are compulsory, the third is optional. The order of languages in some Lander may be Latin, English, French (or instead of Greek). The idea is, to meet the needs of pupils with abilities in different directions.



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Finally, we should mention the schools with a special focus on a particular language. These are the Franco-German *Gymnasien* (in Freiburg i.Br., Saarbrucken, Berlin), with some teaching done in French. There is an Italian-German school in Wolfsburg (because of the high number of people of Italian origin originally recruited as labour by Volkswagen), a Polish-German *Gymnasium* in Frankfurt an der Oder, and Anglo-German schools in various parts of Germany. There are also bilingual curricula, with an increased number of lessons in the first foreign language from grade 5 and teaching in non-language subjects in that language from grade 7. The aims are to acquire bilingual abilities in the mother tongue and a school-taught foreign language, to cement an ability to engage in dialogue in both languages, and to deepen intercultural understanding. Ultimately, this is intended to promote mobility in higher education and in work. In 1993, there was a total of approximately 74 Franco-German-oriented schools in 11 *Lander* and some 80 Anglo-German-oriented schools; these schools were not only *Gymnasien*, but included *Gesamtschulen*, *Realschulen*, *Hauptschulen* and *Grundschulen*.

No more recent figures are available, and the situation is still developing, because this sort of teaching – just like the bilingual classes in individual subjects – is very popular with and greatly supported by parents.

Finally, mention should be made of the European *Gymnasien* in Bavaria, which at present are still pilot schools, with three compulsory foreign languages (from grades 5, 6 and 9). There is also a nationwide attempt to introduce Japanese as a third foreign language and, lastly, there are various schools around Germany which offer a selection of French, Spanish, Russian, Latin, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Portuguese or Italian as a third foreign language.

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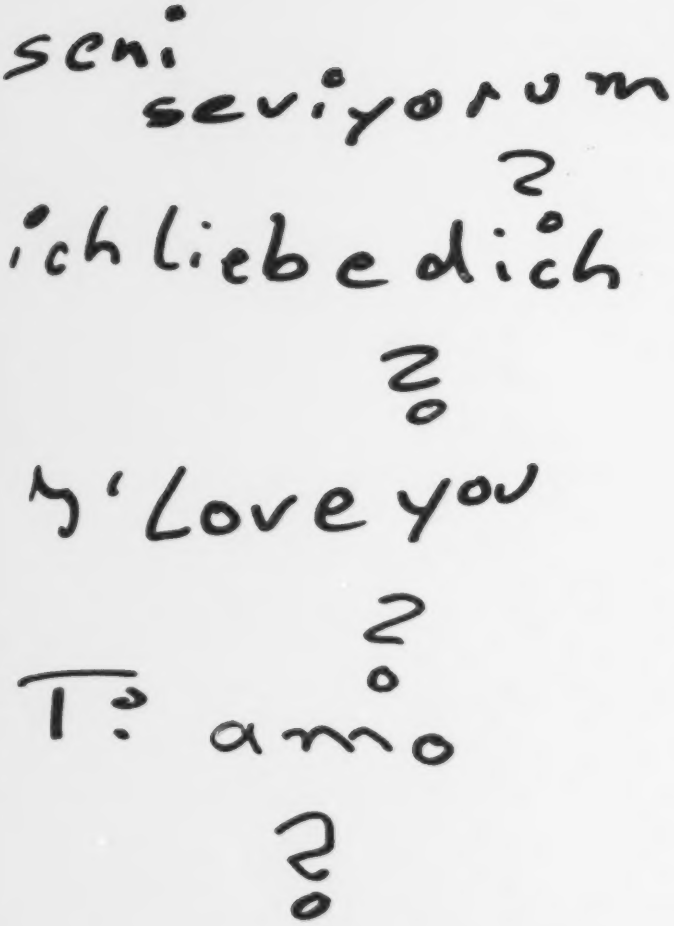

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Exchanges and encounters

School partnerships and exchange trips form a key element of foreign language teaching. The Pedagogical Exchange Service of the Standing Conference of Education Ministers supports and organises exchanges and school partnerships for pupils and teachers. There are a number of programmes, including exchanges for teachers and school attendance for pupils lasting up to one year.

School exchanges in the context of school partnerships are initiated, prepared and supported as part of foreign language teaching, and offer pupils a chance to see how they fare in a foreign language setting. The experience that what has been learned can be of practical use, coupled with the experience of one's own deficiencies, generally motivates pupils. A few figures can serve to indicate the scale of these activities.

Bavaria:
School year 1988/89: 850 partnerships, of which 413 with France, 283 with English-speaking countries, 60 with Italy, 30 with Hungary

Lower Saxony:
School year 1992: 732 partnerships, of which 495 with France, 147 with Britain, 58 with the Netherlands

Rhineland-Palatinate:
More than 700 partnerships, including more than 300 with France, 11 with Poland, 11 with Hungary

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These figures from the Standing Conference of Education Ministers are approximations, because many partnerships stem from the initiative of individual teachers and often run for years without the administration becoming involved. Also, many schools maintain not just one, but several partnerships within the European Union and with schools overseas. In addition, the Pedagogical Exchange Service promoted more than 700 US-German school partnerships in 1992, with funding from the Federal Foreign Office. In the same year, there was a network of some 1400 exchange schools in Germany and the US. Many of these partnerships are based on a joint teaching project, and this has particularly been fostered by the LINGUA project (cf. section on EU mobility programmes). This opening up of schools makes a major contribution towards intensive foreign language training, simply because it demonstrates to the pupils that language abilities are of practical use and gives them a sense of achievement.

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Foreign languages and *"Bildung"*

German schools are basically designed to shape and develop the personality. All other aspects take second place to this overriding objective. This separates school education from vocational training, and this is reflected on the administrative side for example by a division of responsibilities between different units or departments – whereby officials working on either side regard the others with certain reservations. Such a clear distinction between general education and vocational training is unique in Europe. This has become particularly obvious in the LINGUA programme: as the Germans saw it, Action IV was reserved for vocational schools, and pupils at general schools were excluded. Other EU member states permitted the participation of pupils at general schools, because they felt that every type of school education always serves to prepare people for working life; the distinctions are less rigid.

"Bildung" is a key concept for German schools, and it crops up again and again in the debate about schools and their mandate, often with a more or less ideological touch: *Bildung* as education, general education, basic education, formation of the personality, educational values, adult education, education for all, educational opportunities, the danger of declining educational standards, etc. *Bildung* cannot be equated with "education" or "training", it is more than just the passing on of knowledge and skills, and includes attitudes, dispositions, views and values. That is why the ancient languages (Latin, Greek and Hebrew) have played such a major role and still do so today in some places, because they were linked to an ancient education and personal development which was considered an indispensable part of the preparations for academic study. That was the ideal of the traditional German *Gymnasium*, which itself was the expression of German intellectual history and the German love of classical antiquity. Facts, on the other hand, were taught at so-called *"Real"* institutions – the "higher citizens' schools and *Realschulen*". It was not until the mid-19th century that English gained a firm place in the canon of optional languages, still behind French. But neither French nor English held the same rank as the classical languages in the educational ideal of the *Gymnasium*.

It is important to understand this, because the educational ideal of the "humanistic *Gymnasium*" (the name is programmatic; today, we speak more modestly of the *Gymnasium* focusing on ancient languages) had a major impact on the content of modern language classes. Walter Hubner, one of the founding fathers of modern foreign language teaching, explained the role of *Bildung* in modern language teaching in his *Didaktik der neueren Sprachen* (Modern language teaching), 2nd edition, 1933. He started by emphasising the practical significance of a knowledge of modern languages "for reasons of national competition" (i.e. commercial interests), but went on to restrict this, saying that "mere knowledge and ability enter the service of the banal or the inferior, something which is impossible where there is genuine *Bildung*. Knowledge and ability would therefore have to be deliberately placed in the service of *Bildung*, of education. He subdivides the concept of *Bildung* into formal and material education (the content matter). For Hübner, formal education means "the formation of abilities, the methodological development of habits or forms in which intellectual work takes place with growing independence; the creation of a system of mental functions enabling a person to master new situations in life". This includes: sharpening the senses, the ability to link new terms to objects and processes, the understanding of grammatical relations and of the general sense of syntactical complexes, the ability to judge and discuss heard or read content, the precision and exactness of observation and thought, the strength and depth of feeling, the power and resilience of the will – that should be the desired harvest of formal education and should always be taken into consideration when designing lessons. It is to be aspired to through the use of materials which together reflect the "unity of the national cultural heritage" and are committed to the intellectual values of the true, the good, the beneficial and the moral. The pupil is to develop in terms of these values through "educational (formative) work" (Kerschensteiner). There is a tension between formal education and the entire make-up of the mental activities and dispositions of the pupil on the one hand and the "objective values of the material" on the other. And the form of work is that of "the argument deriving from the experience of value and the energy of mental activity". That, in a nutshell, is the educational concept which still basically determines modern language teaching today and is often viewed with astonishment by foreigners. The formulations sound rather excessive to our ears; nonetheless, they precisely describe the qualitative aims and the basic orientation of the German *Gymnasium*, both of which still apply today, albeit in rather weakened form, and both of which act as a guideline to which all the other forms of schools more or less consciously adhere.

Even in the late 1950s, pupils at the *Gymnasien* were still learning languages in order to be able to read and understand the literature

of the other culture, not to be able to communicate with others in this medium on all sorts of subjects. Language was the object and content of the lesson. And this is almost precisely what Walter Hübner describes as the educational goals of modern language teaching; this is the teaching in which future foreign language teachers are trained at universities by the specialists. Even if the emphasis now is more on language abilities – the concept of *Bildung* is still felt and can be seen throughout:

> *"The consideration of language imparts insights into the structure of the language and knowledge of the function and effects of linguistic tools. The following knowledge and insights are necessary: knowledge of the categories of grammatical description, knowledge of important rhetorical and stylistic methods and insights into their effects, knowledge of characteristic linguistic and stylistic structures of English."*
>
> *(from Einheitliche Prüfungsanforderungen in der Abiturprüfung Englisch (Uniform Examination Requirements for the Abitur examination in English), Decision by the Standing Conference of Education Ministers, 1 December 1989)*

In some of the *Länder*, therefore, questions of the structure and of grammatical phenomena (still) form part of the written *Abitur* examination. The way literature is used also still owes much to the old traditions: comparing the values imparted with one's own, discussing the content – this corresponds to the "commentary" or "discussion" asked for in examinations. When an expertise by the Standing Conference of Education Ministers regarding the further development of foreign language teaching called for greater emphasis on the practical side, there was bitter criticism of the impending decline in standards. Yet studying Shakespeare does not exclude the teaching of practical language abilities – you just have to aim to do it deliberately. Another aspect in this context is that the initial training of the teachers is very much oriented towards the history of literature and the academic side. Practical language training often loses out here, and complaints about this are frequent.

The intention here is not to argue for pure practicality. The personal development side, i.e. *Bildung*, remains important today. *Bildung* serves to immunise people against totalitarianism, it opens windows to other points of view, it makes people independent and thus helps to preserve peace. Foreign languages open people's eyes to other forms of coexistence; only with the language can one learn more about other countries (and this includes more than literature), foreign languages are needed for European unification, partnerships and exchanges only function via language – that is what those responsible at various levels are saying about the teaching of foreign languages. This is more practice-related, but the concept of *Bildung* keeps shining through, e.g. when, prior to revising guidelines on English teaching, consideration is given to whether there should be two types of English teaching, a *Bildung*-oriented one, as in the past, and a practical form of teaching.

Finally, the *Gymnasium* and the German school system as a whole have a long tradition which should not be given up unnecessarily. This includes the long duration of language courses (usually 9 years for the first foreign language / English; 7 years for the second foreign language /French/Spanish/ Russian; 5 years for the third foreign language /French/Spanish/ Russian), and this can really only be justified by arguing that this teaching offers more than just the learning of a language as a means of communication. But not everyone taking their *Abitur* wishes to become an English or a French teacher, and therefore not everyone needs such intensive education in literature. European unification and the growing international cooperation demand an ability to speak foreign languages that enables people to talk about all types of substantive issues. The schools must take this into account; they should do more than just pursue what is "useful" (the customer's language). But they must not forget that they are also service institutions for society, which has certain expectations about the "product", not only in specialist subjects, but also in foreign languages. Representatives of industry and commerce often complain that those taking the *Abitur* lack the language skills which they expect from their staff at the various levels of corporate hierarchy.

The changed expectations and demands are increasingly being reflected in the guidelines for foreign language teaching. The mastering of "complex everyday language" is now given as a teaching objective. The ability to communicate, to express intentions in dialogue, to adopt adequate communicative strategies is increasingly playing a role in the requirements for teaching, particularly with a view to intercultural discourse. Other issues currently being debated include an early start, multilingualism, bilingual teaching, independent language acquisition, language skills for communication in all areas of real life, partial compe-

tence, different weighting of course content, opening up of schools and experience of foreign language realities. These are indications of a changed situation. The discussion of the future development cannot be an easy one in view of the traditions described above; the prevailing strategy is to preserve what works and to keep introducing innovations which build on it. Much has started moving, some things have been left by the wayside because they cannot (yet) become accepted or because of the related costs.

Guidelines – the official and secret curriculum

Nothing happens in schools without guidelines. The administration has created guidelines for every subject, for every type of and level in school, and foreign languages have not been overlooked. A guideline is an important instrument for the schools supervisory service, for parents and teachers, and ultimately for the pupils too. It stipulates what is to be covered over a year, it proposes methodological approaches, and it sets out how many progress checks (tests, classwork, homework, examinations) are to take place in each school year.

Guidelines are a means of control of the state; they are therefore commissioned by the relevant ministry and, following approval, are issued by the ministry as an official document. They are binding on the teachers. They are normally drafted by commissions set up specifically for the purpose; in some *Länder*, government agencies are entrusted with the task. In earlier times, the guidelines appeared to be virtually immortal; in view of the relatively rapid developments in research into language teaching and the changing demands, they now only have a limited lifespan of 10–12 years. Drafting usually takes two years, after which teachers submit comments, criticisms are taken into account, a hearing is held and the guideline is then introduced with accompanying seminars for the teachers. After a certain period, the teachers are asked whether and what changes appear necessary. The responses are supplemented by the latest research from the appropriate body and finally result in a decision to revise or redraft the guideline. Didactic and methodological developments cannot be transformed into guidelines much more quickly than this, and one should remember that every change to the guidelines entails a revision of the textbooks. Textbooks have to be authorised; they therefore have to follow changes to the guidelines. Providing textbooks is very cost-intensive; account has to be taken of this.

Guidelines also have a political dimension. They reflect not just the state of academic knowledge, but also the political orientation of the government in power. That is why the distinction between A and B *Länder* (SPD or CDU/CSU-governed) is important. For example, in Bavaria the monarchy, parliament and Shakespeare play a key role in English teaching alongside grammar and the understanding of structures; but in Hesse, for example, the emphasis is on complex everyday language and literature, with formal linguistic correctness taking second place. Any change in government, or even a new minister, brings changes in the guidelines. In itself, this has nothing to do with the quality of the guidelines. Neither the "conservative" nor the "progressive" governments are immune to including inappropriate stipulations in the guidelines. But: stable governments (Bavaria, North-Rhine/Westphalia, Baden-Wurttemberg) result in relatively continuous developments in the guidelines. In *Länder* where power often changes hands between the political parties, the guidelines are altered more frequently. However, all the *Länder* are bound by the Hamburg Agreement, the Uniform Examination Requirements and the standard description of the end of the 10th grade, as decided at the Standing Conference of Education Ministers, and the need for uniformity and internal compatibility in the system means that changes cannot be implemented that easily.

Of course, the governments do not just send their guideline commissions away with a blank piece of paper. They select the members (experienced teachers, recognised experts) carefully, and they stipulate principles to be observed, e.g. the basic stock of knowledge to be passed on, teaching objectives, or desirable innovative developments. In order to ensure that these principles are adhered to, the work of the commission is monitored more or less closely by experts, not least in order to ensure that it will meet with acceptance from teachers and the socially relevant groups and associations which need to give their approval (e.g. parents, trade unions, political parties, etc.). The principles to be observed by the guidelines for foreign languages may contain aspects like pupil-oriented teaching, communicative approach, independent learning, project work, but also overall topics and requirements, e.g. regarding the themes and periods of the literature. More recently, it has been the case that these general principles may be non-language-specific and stipulate nothing more than the fundamental points for

العلماء والتقنيّون اليوم على أنّ الفكر العلميّ والتقنيّ قادر على هدم فكر أخلاقيّ تقليديّ بات غريبًا عن الواقع، وأنّ تغلغل اللاأخلاقيّة (Immoralismus) في عصر الحداثة ليس نتيجة الإرادة السيّئة، إنّما «مادّة ثانويّة» غير متعمّدة نجمت عن التصنيع والتمدّن والعلمنة وغياب المسؤوليّة المنظّمة. واتّضح أنّ الفكر العلميّ والتقنيّ الحديث عاجز منذ انطلاقته عن بناء القيَم العالميّة والحقوق الإنسانيّة والمقاييس الأخلاقيّة . فقد أضحت العلوم الإنسانيّة نفسها في هذه الأثناء خاضعة لمبدإ النسبويّة. وينطوي هذا التطوّر على كثير من الإيجابيّة، منذ نظريّة النسبيّة لأينشتاين (Einstein) ونظرية الكميّة لِهايزنبرغ (Heisenberg) ونظريّة النظام الناقص لِغودل (Gödel).

ب) من أين تستمدّ الأخلاق الصفة الإلزاميّة؟

من المشجّع، أنّ الفلسفة الألمانيّة، خصوصًا منذ الثمانينات، سواء أكانت في خطّ الفلسفة التحليليّة للغة (كارل-أوتو آبيل-Karl-Otto Apel)[٥٦]، أم في خطّ النظريّة النقديّة لمدرسة فرانكفورت (يورغن هابرماس-Jürgen Habermas)[٥٧]، أم في خطّ نظريّة التاريخ (ريديغر بوبنير-Rüdiger Bubner)[٥٨]، بدأت تعير اهتمامًا بالغًا بالتطبيق العمليّ والأسس العقليّة لأخلاق تحمل بعدًا إلزاميًّا. لا شكّ أنّ الفلسفة تواجه عامّة صعوبة كبرى في تأسيس قيَم أخلاقيّة قابلة للتطبيق في الطبقات الشعبيّة الكبرى، وخصوصًا تأسيس أخلاق[٥٩] تحمل طابعًا إلزاميًّا مطلقًا وشاملاً. هناك عدد لا بأس به من الفلاسفة (من ألستير ماكينتاير-Alstair MacIntyre[٦٠] وريتشارد رورتي-Richard Rorty[٦١] إلى ميشال فوكو-Michel Foucault[٦٢]

classwork; these points are then observed and fleshed out when the actual guidelines are drafted. As schools are made more autonomous, they are called on to develop their own programmes, thus enabling priorities to be set and the needs of their pupils to be met – but these priorities must also be in line with the overriding general principles. Everything in this process must adhere to the act on schools of the Land and to the German constitution. It is difficult to obtain an overview of the system, since these documents may bear different labels in different *Länder*, and be called framework plan, compulsory points, guideline, school programme, etc. And, finally, in those *Länder* with a central *Abitur* examination, the key points have to be much more detailed than in the *Länder* where the examinations are run decentrally. None of the *Länder* stipulate any one method, except that teaching should be communicative and be oriented towards communicative language use. Teachers refuse to give up their methodological freedoms, even though it might sometimes be useful to prescribe one or other method more definitely.

Guidelines are important steering instruments, but after they have been read once they are rarely consulted again. There are various reasons for this. Framework guidelines do not provide a methodology with which to plan and give lessons. They are not discussion papers or manuals, but prescriptions aimed more towards the ministerial bureaucracy, the relevant social groups whose approval is required, and the few experts whose advice is usually sought, and less towards the teacher who has to prepare his lessons. This can also be seen in the language used in the guidelines, which is far removed from any methodology. At the same time, there are the textbooks, which have to conform with the guidelines if they are to be approved for use in schools. Textbooks flesh out the prescriptions of the guidelines and process them for use in class. And so we have the odd situation that the guidelines are binding prescriptions for the teacher and his work, but are rarely consulted by him, because he bases his language teaching on the approved textbook. Textbooks are therefore the real or secret curriculum. This does have advantages: even less able teachers cannot do much wrong. But they are outweighed by the disadvantages: publishers, whose influence on teaching is generally underestimated, supply not only the textbook itself, but also accompanying manuals with solutions to the exercises and proposals about the use of additional materials. It is hard to escape this influence in daily teaching in the classroom: the tiresome preparato-

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年他定居哈尔滨，完成了《中国民族简史》一书。在该书中，吕特别注重给予中国的少数民族历史上的平等地位，力避他先前著作中的错误。据他本人说，他原先的著作仍然深受传统史学大汉族主义的影响[44]。1949 年以前，吕振羽主要在下列期刊和报纸上发表过文章：《群众》、《时事类编》、《读书月报》、《中山文化教育馆季刊》、《中苏文化》、《理论与现实》、《文史》和《解放日报》。

1949 年共产党人胜利后，吕先在东北担任过一系列党政职务，1950 年（原著误，应为 1949 年——译者）担任大连大学校长。在历史学界，他曾是中国历史学会的理事和《历史研究》的编委。1961 年又成为中国科学院哲学社会科学学部委员（吕振羽 1955 年即是学部委员了——译者）[45]。此外，他还通过他的活动在中共中央党校发挥着影响[46]。

早在 1963 年，吕振羽就“丧失”了“自由”[47]，1967 年初，他又被捕入狱，直到 1975 年在邓小平的亲自过问下，才获释出狱。“文化大革命”期间，吕主要受到了下列指控：(1)参加过南京谈判，此举被说成“与蒋介石合作”；(2)担任过刘少奇的秘书，如果按照中华人民共和国现今的说法，逮捕吕振羽的目的在于攻击刘少奇[48]，那么吕很早就被剥夺自由一事就不足为怪了。吕振羽在囚禁期间，曾在报纸的边角写下了 3000 多首诗和若干简短的历史评论[49]。然而当 1974 年“尊法批儒”运动展开之时，他却拒绝参加，相反，他“不顾个人安危，勇敢地揭发陈伯达的反革命真实面目”[50]。

Let us recall once again the general environment which will have to be reflected by all language teaching in future. Language skills, at least in the main European languages outside the mother tongue, are no longer demanded only in export departments and management offices or in international organisations, but are a prerequisite throughout Europe and around the world. They help to determine the scope for action and decision-making open to the individual as he lives his own life. Without language skills, intercultural encounters and communication with foreign citizens in Germany and our neighbouring Europeans are impossible. At the same time, they expand the possibilities for involvement in the various manifestations of cultural and social life. Without insights into Europe's rich linguistic and cultural variety, no ties to the emerging European Union can be formed, and no development of a European identity which extends beyond one's own cultural links can take place.

Against this background, a knowledge of and skills in foreign languages are an essential part of basic education. Traditional language teaching must adapt and develop correspondingly. In the debate amongst the experts over the last 5 to 10 years, the traditional issues, which could be said to form a basic didactic and methodological stock of issues (correction, literature, phonetics, writing, preparation for the *Abitur*, etc.) have been joined by new themes which are becoming increasingly significant.

▶ Foreign language teaching can no longer be reserved for certain more advanced educational courses, but is a normal element of every curriculum; this necessitates

try work has been done by the accompanying manual, which also automatically takes any didactic and methodological decisions about the textbook. To some extent, this relieves teachers of their responsibilities, and they are also deprived of the reflection about their own work which is needed for a sensible improvement in quality and for further development. As an aside, we might also remember that, by selecting texts and illustrations, textbooks also determine the direction of the content and can help to create prejudices.

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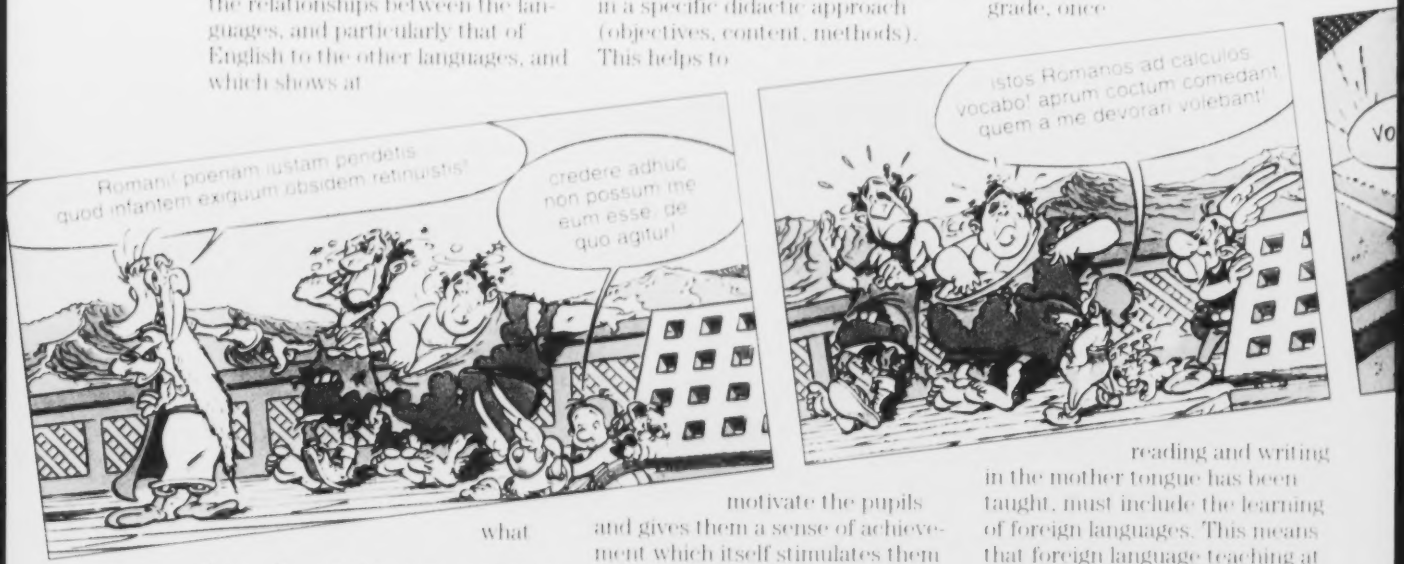
new approaches in the didactics and methodology of foreign language teaching.

▶ Knowledge of just one foreign language is no longer sufficient; in line with the call made by the European Union, as many European citizens as possible should learn two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue. Hence the call for multilingualism. But if multilingualism is to be a constituent element of language teaching, there must be a general plan which describes and justifies the relationships between the languages, and particularly that of English to the other languages, and which shows at


Romani! poenam iustam pendetis quod infantem exiguum obsidem retinuistis!
credere adhuc non possum me eum esse, de quo agitur!
istos Romanos ad calculos vocabo! aprum coctum comedant, quem a me devorari volebant!

what intervals and with what integration (lateral language learning) more foreign languages can be offered and learnt in school. In particular, decisions need to be taken on reorganising the time spent on teaching the languages, structuring the courses better, streamlining them, and varying their content.

Whenever attempts are made to increase the number of languages on offer and to improve the options open to the pupils, the principle of uniformity and internal compatibility of the system must be observed.

▶ If it is expected that more foreign language learning is to take place, this must be within the reach of all pupils. This particularly necessitates a different, developed system of correction and assessment in place of the one generally used today. This also means that the performance expectations need to be reformulated for the various types of schools.

▶ Pupils at different types of schools and in different grades in school have different learning needs and learning methods. Pupils receiving vocational training wish to use languages differently from someone at a *Gymnasium*; pupils at the *Hauptschule* learn languages differently from other pupils. This needs to be reflected in a specific didactic approach (objectives, content, methods). This helps to motivate the pupils and gives them a sense of achievement which itself stimulates them to learn languages. The foreign language teaching designed for the *Gymnasium* must not serve as a yardstick for all language teaching.

▶ The variety of languages in Europe should be reflected in a differentiated availability of languages in school. This can be achieved by including further languages in the spectrum of subjects and by widening the combinations of traditional subjects.

▶ If the time spent on learning the long-term subjects (English, French) is not cut, there will not be any space for further foreign language teaching; it is not possible simply to increase the overall number of teaching hours indefinitely, and other subjects will not be prepared to give up lessons so that the time can be spent on foreign languages.

▶ The *Grundschule* must not simply be a native-language school. Children at that age are particularly receptive to foreign languages; language teaching is therefore indispensable at *Grundschule* level.

▶ If foreign language learning begins earlier, in the third grade of the *Grundschule*, it will be possible for a second foreign language to be taught earlier as well, in the sixth grade, and for work to start on a third foreign language in the eighth grade. This would boost the time available for lessons without increasing the number of classroom hours in secondary school (something that could not happen anyway).

▶ The entire time spent on learning at school, i.e. from the third grade, once reading and writing in the mother tongue has been taught, must include the learning of foreign languages. This means that foreign language teaching at the *Grundschule*, whilst being specifically designed for pupils at that level, must be results-oriented and must dovetail with the following courses at Secondary Level I, without preempting those courses. The secondary schools must be able to build on the results from the *Grundschule*, but, by changing their methodology, must ensure that the pupils can make the transfer without any problems.

▶ After a basic course has been successfully completed which aims at defined and practically useful general communicative skills (roughly in line with the threshold level and waystage of the Council of Europe), the first and second foreign languages should become optional, so that work can begin on learning an additional foreign language.

▶ The courses must be streamlined, content must be reviewed with regard to its relevance, and an appropriate balance must be struck between education *(Bildung)* and practical use. Foreign language teaching in a European dimension should attempt more than in the past to embrace the realities of life in the other country, and should not restrict itself to academic work on texts. It would be desirable to have some practical reflection

hoc malum non est. si cochleae adderentur maceratae liquamine ribesiorum. Romani totas patellas devorarent!
HA!HA!HA HA!HA!HA!
HA!
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on the expressive and communicative possibilities of the foreign language. Teaching should aim to impart general language skills which can be transferred to many areas.

▶ In view of the call for multilingualism, a didactic approach to language teaching must be developed which considers other languages and shows how one can move from one language to another. Language teachers primarily think in the language they are teaching, rather than considering language learning as a whole. No competition between the languages must arise. Teaching in the various languages must be interrelated. This necessitates a didactic and methodological approach based on lateral language learning. This is particularly true of English, which tends to dominate and force other languages into a marginal role. English teaching must prepare the ground for the learning of further languages. And, from the other perspective, whilst preserving their own independence, other languages must build on the preparatory work done by English teaching.

▶ Intercultural education is a special issue. Because of the shift in perspective which goes hand in hand with the learning of a foreign language, language teaching is predestined for this purpose. There is a substantive aspect to intercultural education: information about the country and its culture – but there is also a linguistic component which enables the individual to behave appropriately in certain interculturally relevant situations. Simply knowing facts about the other country is not enough. The necessary linguistic tools need to be provided for the person to respond appropriately to a specific situation. This includes an insight into the cultural dimension of human behavioural patterns which are expressed linguistically. The objective should be not imitation or adaptation, but the ability to find a modus vivendi and/or forms of cooperation. A special aspect of intercultural education derives from the fact that English today is frequently used as a lingua franca by speakers of other languages. In such situations, English loses its specific English cultural identity, and this identity is partially replaced by the cultural identity of the user with his different mother tongue. The didactic basis must provide indications of how to design English teaching in order to prepare people for this situation.

▶ The bilingual teaching of certain other subjects is becoming increasingly popular. But there is still no appropriate didactic and methodological infrastructure enabling this to be expanded. Bilingual courses are often run using the staff available to the school, without any didactic or methodological preparation. This may save money, but it risks amateurism.

▶ Foreign language teaching must be based on the fact that it can only ever impart a fraction of the linguistic reality. Even in our mother tongue, we never dispose of the totality of the language; we learn more every day, especially as the language is always developing. The learning of foreign languages is a life-long task. For this reason, pupils need to have the methodological tools which enable them to keep learning on the basis of the limited skills they have so far acquired, which put them in a position to revitalise forgotten language skills when they need to, and which will give them the scope to acquire a further language on their own. It is necessary to deliberately provide them with methodological approaches for language learning and to practise autonomous learning – organised by themselves on their own responsibility. In addition to insights into the functioning of languages and of interrelationships between different languages, this can for example include how to monitor one's own language skills and use the model of the mother tongue to measure how the linguistic behaviour of native speakers can be utilised to further one's own language skills, how to absorb what the interlocutor provides one with, how to say what one cannot (really) say because the linguistic tools are lacking, but also the basic study skills. In particular, there is a need for a different self-awareness on the part of the teacher (the teacher as advisor on learning).

▶ Courses must be better structured. In particular, the long-term courses do not really seem to be structured into sections with defined competence levels. For *Gymnasium* courses, the Uniform Examination Requirements provide a description of the final level to be attained after nine years of English and seven years of French. For Secondary Level I, grade 10 now has a uniform attainment description for English. But further subdivisions of skills levels and content would be feasible. This would enhance transparency in the European comparison, make courses easier for outsiders to understand, and help the learner to decide whether to take this or that language, to continue or to drop a language.

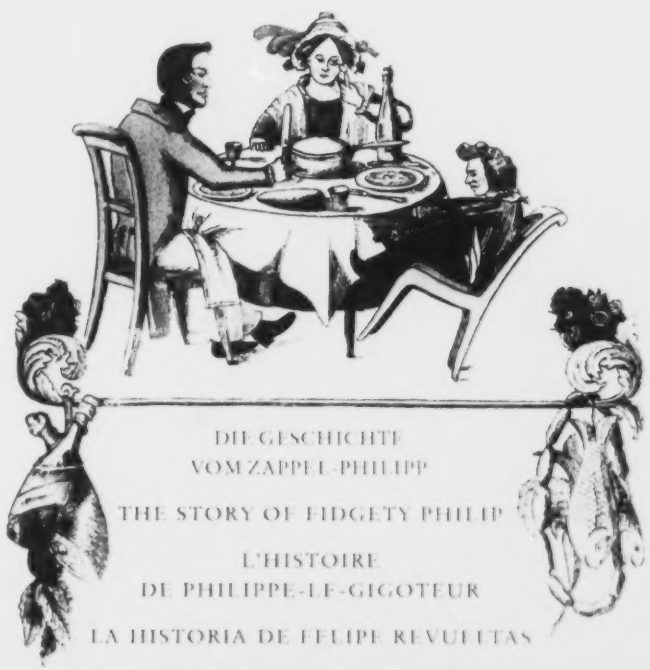
▶ In the course of the reform of the *Oberstufe*, there have also been basic courses available to impart partial abilities (hearing and understanding, hearing, understanding and speaking, reading and understanding). Interlocutors with different mother tongues can communicate very well if each speaks his own language but understands what the other is saying. When concentrating on the skill of hearing and understanding, for example, everything which is needed for the production of a language, and which normally involves a risk of error, is treated subordinately or even omitted. In international situations, this is a very useful and practical skill. Courses of this type were developed and published in Lower Saxony in the 1970s, but met with little response from teachers at the time and were dismissed as semi-education. Today, however, the value of such courses as an enhancement of communication and as a contribution towards multilingualism is being rediscovered. In its position paper on the German EU Presidency in 1989, the Standing Conference of Education Ministers suggested such courses. What is lacking is a didactic foundation to help ensure that many of the "unnecessary" skills are still passed on, so that firstly the pupil is able to understand the interlocutor, and secondly he is able to build on that to attain full competence if necessary.

A few years ago, the schools committee of the Standing Conference of Education Ministers commissioned an expertise which was published as *"Zum Fremdsprachenunterricht in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland – Gegebenheiten und Vorschläge zur Weiterentwicklung"* (On foreign language teaching in Germany – situation and proposals for further development) by the Standing Conference in Bonn, 1994. It contains a number of proposals on the above-mentioned challenges. Many points have also been made in the thoughts about a basic concept for foreign language teaching produced by the schools committee of the Standing Conference, which were attached to the expertise by way of introduction. Other ideas are also being discussed; however, it can be seen that the necessary communication between the various sides – educational administration, teaching staff, universities, parents – is only taking place to a limited extent. Basically, the educational administration decides, whereby individual interests often determine which ideas are taken up and which are rejected. This means that education policy in Germany (and in other countries in Europe) is sometimes somewhat changeable.

The expectations of the customers

What do the customers – industry, commerce, government, society – expect from foreign language teaching in schools? They naturally expect school-leavers with good language skills. For commerce, this primarily means good English skills. The vast majority of all commercial contacts with other countries take place in English. Once, when the LINGUA monitoring committee was discussing the question of preparatory language classes for exchange groups in vocational training, the Danish representative said: "Who wants to learn Danish – they'd do better to speak to one another in English." A prominent representative of the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce gave an opening talk to the federal congress of a multilingual association in which his basic message was: "We need English, only English, because everyone learns English."

A lot of recruitment interviews in large, internationally active companies are held wholly or partly in English. Knowledge of other languages is useful, but forms a job requirement only in very rare



cases. From this perspective, the question of multilingualism assumes a completely different aspect: it is viewed as a goal for a few, not for many, and certainly not for all. As one climbs higher in the corporate hierarchy, it is desirable, but is less a requirement of work than a social and educational benefit: one talks with one's business partner not only about business, but also about art, culture, literature and music, if possible in his language.

The expectations of the language skills of school-leavers depend on the needs of the recruiting company. This means that importance is attached less to textual analysis and more to the ability to write minutes, a note, a summary of specialist and operational matters, to deal with faxes and e-mails and the oral presentation of products, together with knowledge of the respective country and its culture and with appropriate intercultural behaviour and understanding. In government administration, languages are not needed as much as in large companies. But even there, language skills are becoming increasingly relevant: there have been times when Germany has found it difficult to fill posts in the EU administration because of a lack of qualified officials with adequate English and French skills.

Foreign language teaching in vocational schools

Efforts are being made to introduce foreign language teaching more widely in vocational training establishments, but this is proving difficult because the interests of the training facilities do not necessarily include foreign language instruction for the trainees. Also, the apprentice is part of a workforce earning profits, particularly from year 2 of the apprenticeship. Firms therefore have reservations about any increase in the time spent at vocational school. Despite this, all the representatives of the business and professional associations take the view that a knowledge of foreign languages is helpful and necessary. The "Framework Agreement on the Vocational School" (Decision by the Standing Conference of Education Ministers of 14–15 March 1991) says that teaching at the (part-time) vocational schools should provide space for foreign language learning, in line with its significance for the specific occupation. For occupations in "business and administration" in particular, vocationally-oriented foreign language teaching is offered in the form of both compulsory and optional subjects. At full-time vocational schools, foreign languages are basically a compulsory part of the curriculum, with at least one foreign language being taught at full-time schools to students of marketing, catering, commercial, technical and welfare occupations (cf. statistics on p. 25).

However, foreign language teaching is primarily regarded as English teaching, irrespective of specific rules on French or other languages in the Land. On the one hand, this is linked to the widespread perception that those receiving initial vocational training will only be able to keep learning the language they learned at school, and would not be able to cope with a new language, although this has often been disproved; on the other hand, the companies themselves give preference to English. One special characteristic of language teaching at vocational schools is its orientation towards the particular occupation: the teacher selects the content and language in the light of occupational situations, and this involves more than just the relevant terminology. The degree of acceptance of foreign language courses depends partly on the (positive or negative) experiences with language learning at school, and greatly on how far it is possible to indicate specific opportunities to use the skills acquired in the world of work. This has been shown clearly by the joint pedagogical projects in the context of vocational training: those attending vocational schools now recognise the relevance of language learning (which had previously been viewed as a burden) and suddenly take a liking to learning more language. Of course, specific didactic approaches would have to be developed which reflect the nature and the interests of those receiving vocational training. At the same time, these approaches should build on the foundations laid at school.

Bilingual curricula and bilingual lessons

This special type of curriculum demonstrably produces a higher yield and a European benefit. Demand for it from the parents and the pupils is continuously growing. There is a need for a further development of the didactic and methodological foundations and a stabilisation of the organisational basis via better coordination amongst the *Länder* and wider availability of the curricula. At present, lack of money is causing the development to stagnate to some extent. It would be important in all the *Länder* to expand this teaching to more and more types of secondary school, to include further subjects and to produce appropriate teaching material for the whole of Germany. In particular, it would be desirable to see a greater orientation towards topics of the European dimension, for example European history, the common cul-

tural heritage, questions of business and the environment, and intercultural understanding.

The demands made on the teaching staff are considerable and therefore necessitate special courses of initial and further training. It is to be hoped that bilingual curricula will contribute to a greater (post to post) exchange of teachers between the EU member states. It would be particularly desirable to see greater temporary mobility on the part of language teachers and cooperation with their colleagues in the bilingual partner country; this would be to the advantage of bilingual teaching by native-speaker teachers, and would also enhance and deepen the linguistic and intercultural skills of the language teachers.

In addition to these bilingual curricula, there are also bilingual lessons, and these are enjoying rising popularity as well. They could be described as a lighter version of the bilingual curricula: individual subjects – especially history, social studies, geography or natural sciences (chemistry, biology) are taught in a foreign language, mainly English, but also French, and occasionally in other languages. However, English is dominant throughout; English is regarded as easy, and there is also the pressure from the media and pop music and the advice of the parents deriving from their working and tourist experience. (You can get by anywhere with English!)

In many cases, the educational administration makes its approval of such courses dependent on whether they can be implemented using the personnel already in the school. There are no new jobs available; it is rare at present for native-language teachers to be taken on. For parents and pupils, the attraction is to practise the learned language in subjects other than those normally covered by foreign language teaching.

An early start

An early start to foreign language teaching in the *Grundschule* has basically ceased to be an issue. The Council of Europe has held a series of workshops in which delegates from all the member countries presented their models. The debate is no longer about *whether* or *why*, but *how*. In Germany, there was a large-scale, well-documented model trial back in the 1960s, but it was not pursued further because no satisfactory solution was found for the transition from *Grundschule* to Secondary Level I. Firstly, the *Gymnasium* and the *Realschule* did not believe the *Grundschule* could teach languages properly, and, secondly, they did not want to hand the early start over to the *Grundschule*, arguing that it was not worthwhile, since the head start from the *Grundschule* would be made up within two or three months. They also argued that there would be organisational problems, as special classes would have to be set up for the children with advance knowledge gained at *Grundschule*.

The new interest in learning foreign languages has revitalised the discussion about an early start. "Learn your neighbour's language" in Baden-Württemberg – a trial over several years involving French at the *Grundschule*; a trial lasting several years on the question of the basic role of foreign language teaching at the *Grundschule* using English, French and Italian in Bavaria; another trial in Hamburg entitled "English classes from grade 3"; the possibility throughout Hesse to start learning English or French at the *Grundschule*; similar attempts in Lower Saxony; an early start at schools throughout Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania; the encounter model in North-Rhine/Westphalia, and other projects in Rhineland-Palatinate, Saxony, Saarland and Saxony Anhalt – all of these examples demonstrate the fresh interest in foreign language teaching at the *Grundschule*. Even so, the situation is less than satisfactory. There are not enough *Grundschule* teachers with training as foreign language teachers. On the one hand, it costs money, and on the other, trained teachers are not being recruited. There is still a feeling that anyone can cope with "that little bit of English at the *Grundschule*", and that no special training is needed. And there is still a debate about the approach to be taken: encounter versus results-orientation. Those on the one side claim that their approach is appropriate for the children and that results-orientation is merely a systematic course which has been brought forward from Secondary Level I; the others say that it is very much possible to achieve results at *Grundschule* level with play-oriented forms of learning and working, and that secondary schools can build on these results; the encounter approach is said to be non-committal, amateurish and a waste of valuable learning time. Why are children allowed to learn reading and writing and basic arithmetic at *Grundschule*, but only to encounter the foreign language, even though they really want to learn? Language awareness and sensitisation to other languages, the chief objectives of the encounter model, can also be imparted in the results-oriented approach.

PHOTO: DAVID ALSTEAD

Basically, it is generally accepted that there should be an early start to foreign language learning; this was stated by the ministers of education in their position paper of 1989. Despite this, they are not ensuring the corresponding nationwide availability, sometimes for unrelated reasons, e.g. there are not enough *Grundschule* teachers around who are trained as foreign language teachers, but budget constraints mean that the authorities do not intend to set up appropriate courses, or perhaps they are afraid of endangering the traditional role of Latin. To some extent, it is also due to traditional top-down thinking: universities are dissatisfied with the educational level of the students, the *Gymnasium* regards itself as more valuable than the *Realschule* and the *Grundschule*; the *Grundschule* teachers view themselves as being the better teachers but fail to win the arguments because they consider themselves less qualified on specialist issues. They accept, albeit unwillingly, the lower ranking given to them by the others and fence themselves off. Similar attitudes can be seen in the relationship between schools and vocational training facilities.

But this does the *Grundschule* an injustice: it has to work in difficult conditions, its teachers are inappropriately trained for their work as language teachers, there is a lack of support in the form of further training – and yet they are doing good work. However, the demand for European citizens able to speak foreign languages will force a change in the situation. Foreign languages will become a compulsory course for all pupils at the *Grundschule*. But the transitional problems still need to be cleared up. In some *Länder* (e.g. Lower Saxony), a *Grundschule* is only given permission to begin from grade 3 if cooperation with the secondary schools has been put in place. The problem-free transition to which the children are entitled can only succeed if both sides cooperate with and move towards each other. This means that the *Grundschule* needs to see its work in the context of the subsequent language teaching, and that secondary schools need to take the working methods of the *Grundschule* into account and to work from this basis for a transitional period. The transition to systematic teaching must be managed carefully.

Teacher training

According to the official jargon, there are various types of teacher: teachers for the *Grundschule* or the primary level, teachers for the primary level and all or certain forms of schools at Secondary Level I, teachers for all or certain forms of secondary school, teachers for Secondary Level II (general classes) or for the *Gymnasium*, teachers for Secondary Level II (vocational subjects) or for the vocational schools, and, finally, teachers for children with special needs. Like so much in the German school system, this arrangement is most confusing and can only be understood in the light of the different rules in the various *Länder*. To simplify matters, we can say that there are *Grundschule* or primary teachers whose training also allows them to teach at the *Gymnasium* (Secondary Level I), there are teachers who are only permitted to teach in either Secondary Level I or II, and there are teachers entitled to teach in both Secondary Levels I and II. All of this, of course, depends on the respective policy on schools.

Notwithstanding all the differences, there is a certain degree of uniformity: in all of the *Länder*, teacher training is divided between a period of study at a university or an equivalent higher education institution (the first phase) and a period of practical teacher training (the second phase, the preparatory service).

The first training phase (at the university/higher education institution) consists of:

- a section devoted to the specialist subjects, including the didactics of the subjects; the study must cover at least two subjects or groups of subjects;
- a section devoted to educational science, with compulsory courses in pedagogics and psychology; there are also further aspects, such as philosophy, social sciences/politics, theology;
- concomitant periods of practical training in schools lasting several weeks.

Minimum standards apply to the study phase, in the form of standard periods of study and numbers of classes per week (decisions by the Standing Conference of Education Ministers in 1994, 1995 and 1997). There are specific courses for each of the different types of teacher, and these are designed and managed by the university in coordination with the science ministry. For *Gymnasium* teachers, the following rules apply:

> *"The training ... shall take the form of nine semesters of study with a total of about 160 hours of classes per semester in at least two subjects, including subject-related didactics. The study shall be oriented towards the whole academic breadth of the subjects in question, and shall aim to develop an ability to penetrate complex constructs and to work on an interdisciplinary basis. The study shall include several weeks of practical teaching experience; it shall include at least one practical period of didactics or subject-related didactics."*
>
> *(Quoted from "Das Bildungswesen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland – Darstellung der Kompetenzen, Strukturen und bildungspolitischen Entwicklungen für den Informationsaustausch in der Europäischen Union" (The education system in the Federal Republic of Germany – presentation of the responsibilities, structures and educational policy developments for the exchange of information in the European Union); Secretariat of the Standing Conference of Education Ministers (ed.), Bonn 1997)*

The study is expected:

- to be oriented towards the academic subjects and methods needed by a teacher;
- to be oriented not only towards the specialist subject, but also to the sciences of teaching and learning in institutionalised contexts and the sciences of teaching and learning specific subjects;
- to provide the future language teachers with a high degree of functional linguistic skills;
- to provide practice in the key occupational skills of teamwork, communication skills, independent knowledge acquisition, and independent learning.

All these courses are followed by a second phase, the preparatory service. The time spent on this varies between 18 and 24 months, depending on the Land and on the type of school involved. It consists of periods of teaching at schools, of teaching under instruction and independently at training schools, and of pedagogical (usually weekly) and subject-related didactic seminars (alternately every two weeks per subject), in which the experience gained in practice is processed and deepened. Specifically, the following abilities and knowledge are to be learned:

- fluency in the foreign language and metalinguistic knowledge,
- profound knowledge of teaching and learning processes relating to foreign languages, of role behaviour and interaction in foreign language lessons,

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▶ thorough knowledge of socio-linguistic and pragma-linguistic aspects of the language and its use,
▶ thorough knowledge of various aspects of applied linguistics,
▶ knowledge of the people, geography and culture of the countries in which the target language is spoken,
▶ awareness that language acquisition is a slow and gradual process involving the whole of the pupil's personality in which mistakes are normal and useful,
▶ ability to select and procure teaching materials, including the independent production of materials for exercises in communicative skills in the foreign language,
▶ knowledge of the interdisciplinary references of the foreign language classes,
▶ knowledge of research in the field of language acquisition.

That is the external framework of the training for all types of teacher; it is impressive in terms of the length of training and the content involved; really, there should be no deficiencies. Nevertheless, there are inadequacies in the training. A simple comparison of the content of the first and second phases shows that the university obviously fails to cover everything. It fails to provide sufficient grounding in subject-related didactics, language skills are frequently inadequate, the training in the specialist subject neglects issues that are of relevance for the school or for implementation in the classroom – even though the majority of students of philology wish to go on to teach. This does not mean that the university staff teaching the specialist subject should give up their own interests, but they should at least ask how the foreign language teacher in the classroom can use the content of the specialist training they have received. The universities train literary specialists and textual linguists who, in view of their training, will teach their subject as though their pupils will go on to be literary specialists and linguists themselves. There are good reasons why the educational administrations rarely invite academics from the relevant subject to help draw up the guidelines for a subject: they cannot or do not want to adapt their thinking to the needs of the schools. Those academics specialising in subject-related didactics are too taken up with proving how scientific their work is to the academics from the subject itself, and this deflects them from the realities of the classroom they are supposed to be preparing people for. This often manifests itself in highly theoretical publications which are rejected or ignored by the practitioners. At the same time, it is true that nothing is closer to practice than a good theory, although the teachers prefer not to believe that. The greatest deficiency in the training of the teachers, however, is that those involved – university, study and training seminars, training school – do not regard teacher training as a common task, and therefore do not cooperate with one another. Mentors at schools are not usually given any training, but they are expected to look after and advise those doing practical teacher training. As a result, some of those who understand the situation correctly say:

"Training of foreign language teachers at university is undergoing a crisis. It is obsolete and meets neither what society demands from the schools, nor what the schools demand from their future foreign language teachers. If the training of foreign language teachers at universities is to fulfil the need for an academically well-grounded training of language teachers – who must increasingly also teach the cultural side – fundamental changes are needed."

(Quoted from "10 Thesen zur Reform der universitären Fremdsprachenlehrerausbildung" (10 points regarding the reform of university training for foreign language teachers) of the German Society for Foreign Language Research, the Association of Modern Foreign Languages, and the Society for Applied Linguistics, September 1997)

Entire areas are missing from the training and are not mentioned in the 10 points regarding the training of foreign language teachers either (see above): multilingualism, bilingual teaching, help towards self-organised learning, new role of the teacher as advisor on learning, intercultural education, design of school programmes, treatment of literature and the practical side of language learning, reflection on one's own actions/self-observation, lateral foreign language learning, etc. And there is no mention at all of the skills needed by the instructor; it is simply assumed that they are possessed by university staff and trainers at seminars. It is not enough to be a good specialist academic or specialist in didactics with (or sometimes without) classroom experience: the particular abilities of an instructor do not develop automatically, but have to be learned and acquired. Despite all this, the training of foreign language teachers is still of a high quality and creates teachers who are sure of themselves and of their subject – sometimes a little too sure. That occasionally stops them developing further.

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Further training for teachers

Without ongoing further training for the people involved, no system can respond adequately to changes in requirements. Germany has a long history of further training which reaches back into the 19th century, when associations of teachers and universities endeavoured to deepen the knowledge acquired in initial training and to adapt it to a changing society. There is a statutory requirement for all teachers to receive further training, although this does not have to occur through participation at courses put on by the state, but can also take the form of independent reading, e.g. of specialist journals.

Today, the state in particular provides its teachers with a lot of opportunities for further training. All of the *Länder*, who are responsible for further training for teachers, have their own central institutions for this purpose. There are also regional further training courses, events put on by the schools supervisory service (e.g. when introducing new guidelines or examination rules) and in-school further training, for which the schools have a quota (of two to three days per school year), which they dispose of themselves for discussions of school-specific issues and problems, e.g. interlingual cooperation, interdisciplinary project work involving the foreign languages, the designing of bilingual courses, etc. The central *Länder* institutions also organise courses abroad. Lower Saxony, for example, has for many years offered further training in the United States, as well as language training courses in Britain and France. Mention should also be made of the courses offered under the EU's LINGUA/ SOCRATES programmes. A number of teachers have visited other countries, taken part in training programmes or participated with their counterparts from other countries in joint, multilateral projects oriented towards intercultural aspects or towards the society and culture of a certain country.

All teachers in state schools are entitled to receive further training. Their participation is governed by certain procedures, and particular efforts are made to ensure that the availability of lessons at school does not suffer. This is necessary because further training takes place almost exclusively during school hours. Attempts by the administration to encourage teachers to attend further training outside school hours have met with a great deal of opposition from the teachers and their associations. Like all civil servants, teachers have a right to 30–32 days' holiday. Wherever school holidays last longer than that, the teachers are considered to have a teaching-free period. In that period, they can certainly be required to work by their employers.

It is estimated that on average at most 10–12 % of all teachers participate in centrally-run further training, partly because there is a lack of funding to expand the courses, but mainly because attendance is voluntary. No-one can be forced to take part, even if a teacher lacks some of the abilities he needs. It is possible to point out to a teacher that his skills in a foreign language are inadequate, and urgently recommend that he attend a course abroad, but he cannot be forced to do so. It is up to the individual teacher to judge how best to overcome his own inadequacy. This is related to the way teachers view their role and to the tradition of teacher training: after university and study seminars, a teacher is quite simply fully qualified and is therefore not in need of any further perfection. The aware-

ness of the importance of keeping up to date with developments is not as widespread amongst teachers as in other occupations. At the same time, language skills erode faster than anyone can feel comfortable with. After years of classroom work, the language of the teacher approximates that of his pupils, and anyone who has not had the chance to take an Oberstufe course for a considerable period (and this is unfortunately frequently the case with French, due to lack of demand), will find that his foreign language skills are fatally damaged by this forced abstinence. Innovative further training concepts are urgently needed if teachers are to be prepared for the new challenges and if standards are to be kept up; lack of money renders such new efforts unlikely.

Multilingualism and the position of English

Multilingualism has really always been a feature of German schools, albeit with certain limitations. In former times, the two foreign languages always taught at *Gymnasium* included Latin and/or Greek. Latin still plays a certain role today.

Nowadays, multilingualism is used to mean the knowledge of several modern languages. It is true that more pupils learn a living language today than 20 or 25 years ago, but almost all are learning English. A large group of pupils is still denied the chance to learn a second foreign language, and many of those learning a second language choose it from a group of possible subjects for pupils who wish to move from the *Realschule* to the *Oberstufe* of the *Gymnasium*. Lessons in two languages are not available to all, and not even to many, but only to those attending a *Gymnasium*. Others are excluded, partly because there is no teaching method tailored to their needs. One example is people receiving vocational training, who, as has been proven, are very much able to take up and successfully learn a new language at the vocational school if it is taught in an appropriate way. And just as those receiving vocational training learn differently from the pupils at a *Gymnasium*, who have a long period of training in thinking in terms of abstract rules which, with assistance, they are able to transfer from one language to another, Hauptschule pupils learn differently from those at *Grundschule*, and pupils in Secondary Level I learn differently again from those in the *Oberstufe*.

The concept of multilingualism has become more relevant due to the emerging European Union and the need for broader sections of the population to understand one another across national borders. Despite the fact that English now has a prominent role in the canon of school languages (96 % of all pupils in Germany learn English!), experts believe that Europe will not become monolingual. The concept of a separation between one language for work and for public life, and another language (the mother tongue) for private life, is not very attractive, but has, alas, already become a reality to some extent. In the Netherlands, it is not possible to study medicine in Dutch, but only in English, because it is not worthwhile printing textbooks in Dutch for the limited number of medical students. In a case before the European Court of Justice, the complaint lodged by a German teacher against her *Land* government was considered in English. The two parties – both resident in the same German *Land* – had to make their written submissions in English. There is certainly a danger of one language being forced on everyone.

Since this situation has already become a reality, two scenarios are feasible. Either all the linguistic communities agree on a *lingua franca* for use in cross-border cooperation or international settings. National languages become regional languages for use after office hours. For Europe, and the European understanding of itself, such a levelling-down to a single language would not be desirable, and it would not be politically feasible in view of the independent cultural history of the member states – which manifests itself in their languages. Countries will not be prepared to give up their own unmistakable identity. Or, in addition to the one common language (the second language), there is compulsory teaching of a balanced package of further languages together with a range of instruments enabling the individual learner to acquire further foreign languages on his own if necessary. That is the concept of multilingualism. The concept is broadly defined today: multilingualism not only refers to the traditional stock of foreign languages offered at school, but expressly aims at a greater variety of language teaching, i.e. at a diversification coupled with an improvement in the options open to the pupils, with languages like Arabic, Japanese and Chinese also being included. A diversification of available courses would make it possible for every form of secondary education to include a choice of more foreign

languages. This is in line with the proposal from the Council of Europe to establish a Language Portfolio listing all foreign language skills acquired from institutional education plus those gained from periods spent abroad or in other ways, thereby creating an individual foreign language profile.

Because 16 separate *Länder* are responsible, it is not easy to implement the diversification. The Hamburg Agreement attempts to strike a balance between plurality and the necessary uniformity and internal compatibility of the system. Different interpretations of the agreement have resulted in a relatively diverse availability of foreign languages at schools. But there are certain limits which block an absolute diversification and a completely free choice of languages. The factors include the significance of a language in the world (English, Spanish, Portuguese), national interests (English, French) and regional interests in border areas (Dutch, Danish, Czech, Polish). Political and historical developments and treaties and ensuing cultural agreements grant priority to certain languages or at least ensure them a secure place in the canon of foreign languages. For example, the Franco-German Treaty and the Franco-German Cultural Agreement stipulate the promotion of the partner country's language (although this has not prevented the decline in teaching of French and German respectively). Finally, the locality of a school, the way it is organised (availability of trained teachers) and the legislation governing schools have to be borne in mind. There is a need for a practical compromise between the desire for greater variety on the one hand and the constraints arising from the need for uniformity and internal compatibility in the German school system on the other. All of the *Länder* are attempting to provide special courses to meet the demand. In North-Rhine/Westphalia, a major project entitled "Ways to Multilingualism" has been initiated; in Bavaria, there are the European schools with their greater prominence for foreign languages; in Lower Saxony and North-Rhine/Westphalia, teaching of Dutch has been particularly boosted because of the proximity to the Netherlands; there are Polish-German schools along the border in Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Saxony.

The situation is developing. Diversification and the formation of individual profiles could be achieved via different possibilities for language combinations and a more flexible order of languages. English does not always have to be the first foreign language, and related languages could be taught together or sequentially – here, it could make sense to include the ancient languages (Latin – French/English; or Latin/Spanish/English and perhaps French). However, because of the significance of English, every pupil will have to learn it at some point at school; but it does not have to be the first foreign language and be taught over 9 years. If there is to be diversification, there is need for an earlier start on foreign language learning, an earlier start on learning the second/third language, and a reduction in long-term courses; with a limited quota of lessons, the way they are distributed amongst the individual languages needs to be rethought.

In parallel to this, it is of course also necessary to review the content of the courses; some aspects are an important element of the course, others have been added on and should be cut out. Some aspects can be combined; of course pupils can still interpret literature whilst learning language skills which will be useful at work. Partial competence in the so-called third and fourth languages expands the communicative possibilities and also contributes towards diversification and multilingualism. Partial competence is becoming more and more attractive, particularly amongst the staff working in international organisations and on international cooperation. One cannot fully learn all languages; nor is there a need to do so. But this means that the learning of languages itself must be taught, so that a learner can expand his partial competence on his own if need be. Viewed in this way, teaching people to organise and take responsibility for their own learning is a path towards multilingualism. Implementing multilingualism is not as simple as it sounds here. Pupils, the "other" partners in language acquisition, are not necessarily prepared to learn more foreign languages, even though there is certainly an understanding of their general value and usefulness. Many want languages for the purpose of communication in other subjects. For this reason, the practical use of language learning needs to be made more obvious. Also, pupils suspect that an increase the number of conditions attached to foreign language learning will affect the assessment of their performance, and here they are particularly thinking of the nature of correction and grading of language skills. It is certainly true that the assessment procedures currently in place tend to discourage rather than to motivate, and they also mean that the learning of additional foreign languages can increase the danger of failure at school. Nor can one overlook the fact that some of the decisions by the educational administrations run counter to the desired multilingualism. If only one foreign language is compulsory in the *Abitur*, pupils will usually go for English.

1. General (non-vocational) schools (Secondary Level I and II)

	only western *Länder*	western and eastern *Länder*	
	1982	**1993**	**1994**
Total pupils	5,604,064	5,532,336	5,638,468
Of these, the following learned the following language as a first or additional foreign language:			
English	5,241,211/93.53%	5,281,598/95.47%	5,409,568/95.94%
French	1,403,013/25.04%	1,306,637/23.62%	1,382,437/24.52%
Latin	*805,283/14.37%*	*597,765/10.80%*	*613,215/10.88%*
Greek	27,837/0.50%	14,616/0.26%	13,977/0.25%
Russian	23,023/0.41%	422,665/7.64%	316,368/5.61%
Spanish	29,685/0.53%	50,576/0.91%	57,789/1.02%
Italian	7,772/0.14%	14,696/0.27%	18,914/0.34%
others	21,238/0.38%	27,017/0.49%	18,635/0.33%

2. Vocational schools

	only western *Länder*	western and eastern *Länder*	
	1982	**1993**	**1994**
Total pupils	2,596,389	2,446,961	2,425,138
Of these, the following learned the following language as a first or additional foreign language:			
English	497,476/19.16%	586,525/23.97%	618,932/25.52%
French	77,346/2.98%	85,768/3.51%	81,582/3.36%
Latin	1,133/0.04%	1,228/0.05%	1,002/0.04%
Greek	43/0.00%	13/0.00%	28/0.00%
Russian	495/0.02%	12,637/0.52%	14,430/0.60%
Spanish	27,525/1.06%	35,291/1.44%	39,772/1.64%
Italian	310/0.01%	335/0.01%	1,468/0.06%
others	1,641/0.06%	1,001/0.04%	2,217/0.09%

(Statistics from the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of Education Ministers, 22 May 1996; order slightly changed)

There is a need for a new didactic approach aiming less at distinctions and more at correspondence between the methodologies used for the various languages. English needs to assume a sort of preparatory function for the learning of other languages, and the latter then need to respond to this appropriately. This is what is meant by "lateral language learning", which is oriented towards commonalities in the learning of different languages and towards mutual support. Here, too, the general plan already mentioned above would be of vital assistance. Various calls have been made for such a plan; it has been commissioned from the European language boards and international federations of associations of language teachers, which also include German language teachers' associations. However, given Germany's federal structure, no such plan can be expected in the foreseeable future.

English is probably the most-learned language, and many people use it to speak to one another, to negotiate, to clarify matters. In highly specialised fields, English is indispensable in terms of world-wide scientific cooperation, since those involved wish to communicate rapidly beyond national and linguistic borders. In commerce, too, English has generally become established as a lingua franca; major aspects of European unification are also taking place in English. The great efforts being made to foster the other European languages, the *langues moderne (langues moins diffusées et moins enseignées)*, with costly support programmes, have not altered this at all.

This has also had an impact on foreign language teaching in Germany. The statistics presented here demonstrate the dominance of English all too clearly; the other languages are right to complain about this, particularly when multilingualism is officially propagated but the concomitant administrative support in the form of decrees is lacking or when educational policy decisions by the education ministries give priority to one language, e.g. by stipulating that only one language has to be studied for the *Abitur*. The pupils then opt for English. The fact that only one school in a city the size of Düsseldorf actually put on a *Leistungskurs* (intensive *Abitur* course) for French should be cause for reflection.

It would of course be ridiculous not to meet the general desire for English teaching: every pupil has to learn English, there is no escaping that. But: what will become of the other languages, what happens to the mother tongue? Because of the large number of native speakers, German is not a *langue moderne* according to the EU definition. Even so, German only comes fourth in the list of taught and learned languages, behind English, French and Spanish. What will become of the other languages, the real *langues modernes* such as Danish, Swedish, Dutch or Italian? And what role will be played by languages like Polish, Russian or Czech? Will they all become languages of less value for general communication in Europe?

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De facto, English is already the *lingua franca* in Europe. Sooner or later, English will be used as a working language at all levels of cross-border cooperation in the EU. This has consequences which are overlooked by most of the advocates of English: will German then still be a language in which one can or may communicate with others in internationally operating companies or organisations? Why still learn Danish or Dutch, or even French? All this may be practical, but what cultural individuality and variety is lost? In European networks, the (almost) exclusive use of English has many material repercussions, because a language always also transports culture-specific content. Ultimately, it is also a question of what yardsticks, attitudes and modes of thought are to apply in future. A role is also played by the fact that, if English is a *lingua franca*, those who speak it as their mother tongue have a not insubstantial advantage in negotiations, agreements and treaties.

In Germany, as opposed to the smaller EU member states, the question of a *lingua franca* is not regarded as a great threat, because people (still) feel fairly safe in view of the large number of German native speakers, and this opinion is shared by the education policy-makers. For the schools administration, of course, English as one language for all would be practical and save money; less so at general schools, but certainly in the field of vocational training. People can go on to learn other languages after leaving school. More people are already learning foreign languages outside schools than in the institutionalised system. Recently, the number of sceptical voices has been increasing, although this has not so much been about the question of whether a lingua franca is useful and sensible or not, and more about the risk of losing cultural diversity and how to counter this risk.

The official position, of course, is in favour of multilingualism. In the eyes of many teachers, however, certain decrees and measures unofficially or implicitly strengthen the position of one language to the detriment of the others, and this is confirmed by representatives of the ministries, the schools supervisory service and the research institutes from all of the *Länder*. The narrowing of the choice of languages available and of language learning can also be observed elsewhere. The Federal Foreign Languages Competition for pupils at Secondary Levels I and II, for example, neglects the less studied languages (Russian, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic), even though it exists to promote the learning of languages *per se*. At the insistence of the Federal Government, the other languages are either marginalised or ignored – but the competition does include Latin. There are good reasons why people are calling for linguistic ecology. This call particularly represents a task for the didactics of English teaching: if it is right and useful to support the variety of European languages and cultures, English must not suffocate all the other languages. For this reason, methodologies need to be developed for English teaching which leave room for the other languages. English lessons must prepare and support the learning of other languages.

So English lessons will have to change. If English is used more and more as a *lingua franca*, should not the traditional social and cultural topics at least be supplemented by intensive communicative training and the discussion of the problems and strategies which are of relevance for communication in general, not least with non-native English speakers? Should not a culturally neutral English be taught – something that will necessarily impact on the linguistic data to be taught and learned? Is the teaching of the culturally typical use of idioms still necessary? Can one deviate from the specific British use of the English language, as long as the message remains clear? Training in intercultural skills then acquires a different emphasis: what intercultural skills are needed for negotiations between non-native English speakers from various countries, and do they need to be taught?

These are important fields for didactic research which should be particularly studied during initial teacher training.

EU programmes – their impact on foreign language teaching

It is reported that one of the founding fathers of the European Communities, which were initially established just as an economic and a coal and steel community, groaned years later that, had he known what difficulties European unification would entail, he would have started with unification in the sphere of education. That sounds very pessimistic, but is quite understandable.

Despite the talk of a European dimension, the education systems in particular are still very much dominated by thinking in national categories. This also applies to the foreign language teaching of the member states: the interests of the members vary. The smaller languages know that they only play a minor role in the concert of European languages. That is clear simply from the figures: 5 million

Danes, 7 million Swedes against the rest of the Union! For these countries, language learning is a *sine qua non*. That mainly implies English plus one or maybe two other languages. The situation in Spain is similar. Germany, the language of the EU country with the largest population, plays only a subordinate role to English and French. In Britain, the question asked is different again: English is taught in all the countries; teachers and pupils alike want to come to Britain to practise. English teaching is a booming industry and an important commercial product. Learning other languages is therefore not of essential significance.

European unification, however, depends very much on whether people negotiate common problems and find mutually acceptable solutions. That cannot happen without language. In a modern company, communication between different teams is essential to corporate success, and the same goes for European unification. There is no area of European life where there is no need to hammer out common interests, mutual understanding and compromises. That cannot work without knowledge of the other side, i.e. it cannot work without education. Economic interests let people work together as long as both sides derive a benefit; afterwards, the tie is cut. For Europe and the formation of a European identity, loose contacts are not enough. It is necessary to move closer together, to give something of oneself to the others, and to receive something in exchange. That is no easy task, particularly in the field of education. Education is an essential element of national culture and identity, more than commerce or driving on the left. Anyone who has worked on a multilateral educational programme of the EU knows how much effort is needed to jump these hurdles of national identity. This is also one element of Germany's problems with a voice for the EU in educational matters. Other member states take a similar view. That is why the concept of subsidiarity has been particularly effective in the sphere of education.

So if one wants Europe, the national identities must be brought closer together, which does not mean giving up individual cultural identities, and the future citizens must be educated appropriately, which in turn means bringing the educational systems and course content closer together. Ultimately, education will be in a position to permit an awareness of a common Europe and a common European identity to form and develop. And this necessitates understanding, i.e. a knowledge of foreign languages. A knowledge of foreign languages is the key to other cultures.

As part of the preparations for the German EU Presidency in the second half of 1989, the Standing Conference of Education Ministers drafted a "Position paper on EU educational and cultural policy" (decision by the Standing Conference dated 24 April 1989), in which a particular emphasis was placed on greater support for foreign languages. The calls made in the paper include: foreign language teaching in kindergartens and at primary schools, an earlier start to teaching in the second foreign language, lessons in two foreign languages for as many pupils as possible (a call backed by the European Commission: two foreign languages for as many European citizens as possible), an expansion of the availability of foreign language teaching with lessons in a third language, availability of courses with limited objectives in further foreign languages, more information about history, culture, politics and economics in the partner countries.

The European Commission quickly recognised the significance of foreign languages as an important element of general education for European citizens. Key aspects of its policy include the freedom of movement of EU citizens (as guaranteed in the EC Treaty), the freedom to choose where to live and work, the freedom to take part in educational courses in all member states, and mutual recognition of diplomas and qualifications. It has therefore stated its views in a series of declarations on the role of foreign language teaching for European unification. This fed into the Council decision of 28 July 1989 on an action programme to promote foreign language skills in the European Community (LINGUA). This programme, which was allocated ECU 200 million, was intended, inter alia, to promote further training abroad for language teachers, the development of networks, e.g. of educational institutions and establishments offering further training for teachers, and, not least, exchanges for young peo-

ple. At the European conference on foreign language learning held in Bonn in November 1994, three key points were retained as the findings:

▶ over the past five years, the LINGUA programme has sparked off an intensive debate on the role of foreign languages in Europe, has provided an important stimulus for higher quality language teaching, and has made a wide section of the public aware of the growing significance of foreign language skills;

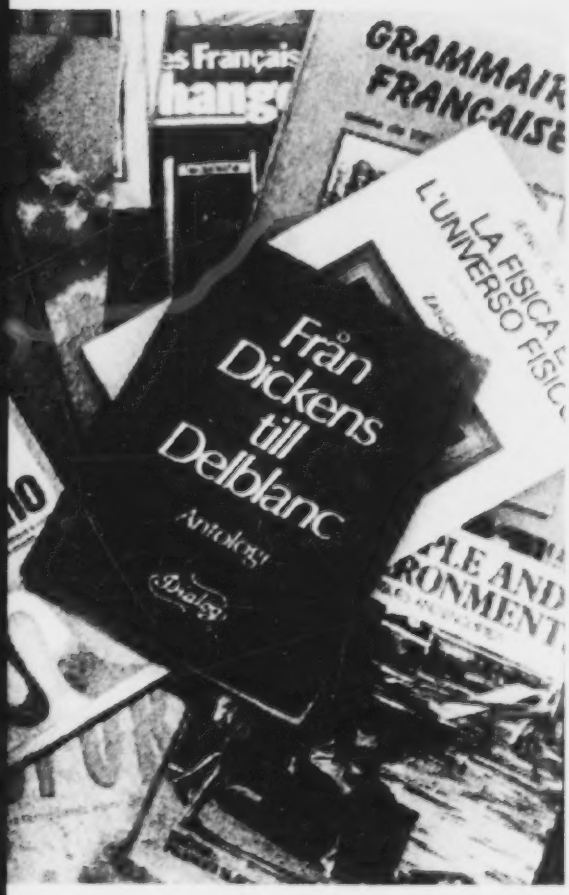
▶ the programme has enabled many students, pupils and teachers to take part in exchanges and encounter projects, and LINGUA has given a large number of people receiving vocational training their first chance to encounter foreign languages and foreign cultures directly;

▶ the reports of those taking part show how the exchanges have altered attitudes and feelings about neighbours, and this is of far-reaching significance in terms of educational and social policy.

The impact of the LINGUA programme is indeed far-reaching and irreversible. The debate about the value of foreign languages was conducted on a broad basis in Germany in the media, at congresses and in fora and hearings, and not only by specialists. Representatives of industry, government and parliament (the debate on making Germany competitive), the business associations, the regional chambers, the *Länder* boards of parents and the Association of *Länder* parent bodies in Germany (the Federal Parents' Council) spoke up and called for further development of foreign language teaching. In response to a report by the members of the German delegation on the LINGUA monitoring committee, the schools committee of the Standing Conference of Education Ministers commissioned an expertise.

This expertise has now had a clear impact, not least because the pressure from the population, industry and commerce demanded changes and improvements: foreign languages should be taught in such a way that they serve not only the understanding of literature, but also the treatment of other – technical, economic, legal, general cultural – issues. All of the *Länder* are working on new principles for language teaching. Universities are beginning to think about the initial training of the future language teachers. Congresses, such as the recent international congress on foreign languages in Luxembourg, and regional meetings in the *Länder*, are looking into basic policy questions of language teaching and its ongoing development.

In this context, mention should be made of the EU mobility programmes, both the LINGUA programme (which is now continuing in the form of the SOCRATES programme) and LEONARDO, which was specially designed for vocational training. According to the figures from the reports on European Commission activities, some 11,550 teachers took part in further training in other EU countries from 1990/91 to 1997/98. In the same period, the language skills of some 15,028 German young people, most of them in vocational training, have benefited from periods spent abroad under the programmes and through work on joint projects with young people from other EU countries. This has had an impact and has brought various changes, often unnoticed by the administration. People have seen that other countries also have good language teaching and achieve presentable results, that materials are better than at home, that developments in some areas are further advanced in other countries than in Germany – in other words, people have seen that the foreign language teaching in Germany is not the last word. This experience has also had an impact in the classroom itself: in many ways, as teachers compare themselves with what they see in other countries and review their own standpoint, they have become more open to things outside their previous narrower experience. Also, innumerable contacts have been established between language teachers from the member states who met at further training courses or when preparing and implementing pedagogical projects. It has also been demonstrated that young people in vocational training certainly can learn French and other languages if they are taught using appropriate methods. Joint work with young people from other



countries on a project which corresponds to their vocational interests motivates people to use the foreign language and arouses curiosity for "more language".

In general, it can be seen how the young people growing up now are much more relaxed and natural in their contacts with their contemporaries from other countries; Europe and a community with others in the European Union is very close and real to them. The cause of this lies not only in the young people's many shared interests in computers, pop music and fashion, but also in joint youth schemes with France and Poland, in the many opportunities to meet via school partnerships, in the networks and partnerships via e-mail and the Internet, but also in the improved direct understanding, even if this primarily occurs in English.

Meeting other people from other countries in their own cultural environment is very important, and doing things together creates insights and an understanding which a tourist can rarely gain. It is not always easy to take a detached view of oneself and one's own values, but in doing so one learns what problems arise in intercultural communication. At the same time, one grasps the need for and the right approach to preparing young people for this in the classroom. The passages quoted above from the conference report clearly highlight this European added value.

This has also resulted in a new attitude to foreign language teaching: the pure background information about culture and society, the knowledge about the institutions and the patterns of real life in another country are necessary and important, but are no longer sufficient. Intercultural communication requires specific help on personal and linguistic behaviour. Calling for tolerance and empathy alone is inadequate. Intercultural education is a difficult but necessary task, and foreign language teaching cannot escape this challenge, simply because of the change in perspective that goes hand in hand with foreign language learning. The didactic debate is indeed increasingly focusing on this issue. The EU education and mobility programmes have clearly made people aware of this aspect.

Correction and assessment – grades, examinations, control of standards

Foreign language learning is also – regrettably – subject to the demands of correction and marking. Correction alone is primarily just one element of classroom work: the learner's use of the language is corrected in order to raise him to the next level of learning, at which level correction again aspires to improve his skills. From this perspective, correction is a helpful and useful teaching instrument. The role of correction as a basis for grading performance via a system of marks is only a secondary one.

This is where the problems begin: what is correct, what is wrong, what is acceptable and what is not? Non-native speakers tend to concentrate on things that can be looked up (vocabulary and syntax). They look less at idiomatic expression and everyday language use, whereas native speakers tend to focus on these latter aspects: we don't say it like that; you need to say this to express your meaning. What is the yardstick to be? Errors of formal grammar are easier to identify; they can be clarified. But a sequence of grammatically correct sentences does not necessarily produce good English or French. In the written work of advanced learners, the real weaknesses which lessen the value of the work relate not to formal grammar but to what, in their suggestions about corrections, the Uniform Examination Requirements term "expressive power".

One association of language teachers, the German General Association of Modern Philologists (now called the Association of Modern Foreign Languages), has for many years kept statistics on the results of *Abitur* examinations in the various subjects. The statistics show that modern languages usually come behind Latin and the exact sciences. It is easy to see why this is so: for all types of linguistic activity, all essential aspects of communication – linguistic (vocabulary, syntax, usage), discursive and strategic (e.g. register, order, approach, etc.) and situational and socio-cultural aspects (who is being spoken to, in what situation?) – have to be mastered in order to respond appropriately to a situation. You can get by without the gerund or the subjunctive, but you then lose essential communicative possibilities. Further sources of errors and misunderstandings are contained in the respective situation and in understanding the interlocutor. Corrections in schools have mainly concentrated on the formal grammatical side. If it's wrong, it's because the grammar books say so, or because the way the word is used in the text does not correspond to the entry in the dictionary. The normal signs used in Germany to indicate errors (Gr = grammar; T = tense; WSt = position of word; Vok = vocabulary; Prap = preposition) correspond to this. And then the errors are totted up: 10 items out of 20 are wrong (in a test), or there are 30 errors in 1000 words, producing a mark which places the work in the middle or higher or lower in the scale of grades. Consciously or unconsciously, pedagogical considerations also play a part: after three weeks of work on the gerund and many exercises, a teacher will naturally be disappointed or even personally insulted if mistakes are still being made. Use is still made of a cross or a double minus on the

paper by way of punishment. And errors of elementary grammar (e.g. a missing "-s" in the third person singular in English, wrong formation of participles from irregular verbs in French, words in the wrong position) are also assessed in the same way. Yet all linguistic errors are actually equal: it is teaching itself that makes them more or less serious. If teaching is based more on the communicative approach, then grammatical errors may be annoying, but as long as the message gets across, they are less significant. At the same time, false relations, changes of tense, links, references to previous or ensuing sentences, and connectors become more important. In other words, those aspects which transform a series of individual sentences into a text. Depending on the expectations against which a text or language use is measured and corrected, the result will vary. As a rule, pupils do worse when the assessment is mainly based on formal grammatical aspects. That explains why pupils hesitate to learn additional foreign languages when they can get away with one. It also explains why they give preference to English, which is supposedly so much easier than other languages.

And there is another point: no philologist likes to be shown that he has missed or wrongly corrected an error. He will follow the matter up and search through grammar books which pupils do not have access to and which have not been used in the classroom. Controls exercised by a colleague for the final examinations are often hampered by conflicting views on how correct a linguistic expression is. Finally, teachers do not want their classes to appear in a bad light and occasionally close one or even both eyes to mistakes.

The performance of pupils is expressed in reports – six-monthly reports, reports at the end of the school year, school-leaving reports, *Abitur* reports – in the form of grades stipulated and defined in the Hamburg Agreement of 1964. The grades range from **Very Good** (= 1, when the performance is well above the required standard), to **Good** (= 2, when the performance fully meets the required standard), **Satisfactory** (= 3, when the performance on the whole meets the required standard), **Adequate** (= 4, when the performance contains deficiencies, but on the whole still meets the required standard), to **Poor** (= 5, when the performance fails to meet the required standard but indicates that the necessary basic knowledge exists and that the deficiencies can be removed in a foreseeable period) and **Very poor** (= 6, when the performance fails to meet the required standard and indicates that even the basic knowledge is so fragmentary that the deficiencies cannot be removed in a foreseeable period).

The award of grades depends very much on the linguistic abilities of the teacher (because he is linguistically competent, he sees more errors and wrong expressions than others) and his attitude to language teaching (more grammar-based, or more communicative). It therefore always represents a subjective assessment, with the class average, the attitude to learning and the abilities of the group playing a role. There is nothing wrong with this in principle, because it permits account to be taken of individual development, which does not usually improve in a linear fashion, but in leaps and bounds, and is determined by many psychological factors which affect learning. It would scarcely be pedagogically correct to impose an objective or objectivised yardstick which ignores the learning environment of the individual, because it disregards the general and personal factors affecting learning, the subjective progress made and the efforts made to learn. On the other hand, this results in unbalanced grading: the grade given does not provide any information about the quality of the performance in comparison to another performance produced in a different learning group or school. This raises questions about the control of standards and its criteria. In general, one can say that there is no objective assessment; nonetheless, it is useful to have criteria against which the linguistic performance of everyone in the group will be measured.

This occurs, for example, in the Uniform Examination Requirements; these are agreements between the *Länder* on the required standards for the various subjects in the *Abitur*, which are then implemented by the *Länder* in their own examination requirements and rules. The uniform requirements describe in detail the performance requirements and the areas to be assessed: content-related performance (understanding the text, developing the topic, comments), linguistic performance, subdivided into expressive powers (appropriateness in terms of nature of text, composition, length, style) and correct use of language (formal correctness measured against an accepted linguistic standard). Here, it is remarkable to note the increased importance attached to expressive powers, as opposed to pure correctness, through the use of criteria like variety and precision of vocabulary, economy and aptness of expression, clarity, complexity and variation of sentence structure, appropriateness of stylistic level, linguistic linkage of the topics and subtopics. At the same time, one should highlight the uniform weighting of errors: all errors count equally, with the exception of spelling mistakes, which are counted as half. By taking this approach, the Uniform Examination Requirements are making the first practice-related and practicable attempt to assess one-off individual linguistic performance (in the form of written responses to examination tasks) more objectively, and particularly to assess the performance of a whole group on the basis of the same criteria.

However, it is only fair to say that not every teacher is actually able to implement the Uniform Examination Requirements. This is partly because the instruments for assessing language performance are still mainly based on the sentence and on formal grammar, and in consequence the main points needed for successful communication are often ignored. At the same time, there is a lack of accepted labels to indicate failings in the coherence of a passage of a text, such as redundancy, references to previous/next sentence, links between sentences (linguistic, logical), etc. And another problem is that linguistically erroneous but communicatively successful expressions are still marked as being wrong, without any thought being given to at least partially crediting the attempt to say something even though the pupil could not find the right word (directly translating the German into *treasures of the soil* rather than using the English phrase *mineral resources*). But that is actually the real situation which repeatedly confronts the user of another language: he has to get his message across using the stock of linguistic data available to him. Some work by pupils is assessed as being in order simply because it consists of a series of correct sentences; the shape and coherence of the passage or text as a whole is ignored. For this reason, pupils pursue an error-avoidance strategy, by restricting themselves to saying what they can rather than communicating what they really want to say, because they are not sure if they actually can. And the link between content and choice of language is neglected. For many teachers, quantitative assessment criteria take precedence over qualitative ones like substance of message and corresponding socio-linguistic and situationally appropriate language. It is clear that all mistakes need to be marked, weighted and included in the assessment, but this should occur less rigidly and schematically, and should instead conform with the object. The procedure generally used at present, as described above, is a deterrent. Many pupils reject a second language at school if they can, and obtain the linguistic knowledge they need outside school.

Nevertheless, the criteria for and suggestions about assessment contained in the Uniform Examination Requirements represent a significant step forwards in the development of foreign language teaching. The essentially reproductive task of retelling an account has been replaced by innovative types of exercises which correspond to classwork and give a more reliable indication of the linguistic abilities of the pupils than retelling can. The nation-wide Uniform Examination Requirements, which the *Lander* flesh out and transform into law, contain a catalogue of tasks: the **thematic task** (a non-text-related essay on a prescribed topic; almost only used in North-Rhine/Westphalia), the **text-related task** (analysis and evaluation of a text and its place in a wider context with independent comments – the most widespread), the **combined task,** consisting of a **task of hearing and understanding plus a text-related task** (less common, due to the related problems of assessment), the **transformation of something visual into language plus a text-related task** (also less common, because it is not always easy to find thematically related visual and textual material), and a **text-related task plus translation** (mainly in *Länder* with a central *Abitur*, occasionally linked to questions on grammatical points in the text).

It should also be noted that the Uniform Examination Requirements have had a beneficial impact on lessons. Lessons are almost always designed to meet the needs of examinations. The text-related task in the examination has resulted in more intensive training in the production of texts and of writing in a manner appropriate to the matter involved. This has enriched

the lessons and has enhanced the way topics are treated. Implementation is not uniform across all the *Lander*. Some of the *Lander* have a central *Abitur* examination (Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland), others have decentralised examinations. Both sides swear that their approach is the only correct one, which alone can guarantee standards of education at the *Gymnasium* (people like to refer to that aspect). Each side regards those leaving its schools with the *Abitur* as being the best educated. Such claims cannot withstand any serious tests. Customers in industry who work in the catchment areas of both systems are unable to perceive any distinctions in the language skills which they regard as relevant. The only sure thing is that pupils from one system cannot cope with the examination of the other because they lack the necessary training.

Finally, the *Abitur* examination, with the Uniform Examination Requirements, was until recently the only standard stipulated throughout the system. It set out the expected performance at the end of the 13th grade (with nine years of English, seven years of French/Russian/Spanish, and five or three years of Spanish or French).

At other key points in the system, e.g. the end of Secondary Level I, there were only reports or school-leaving reports of varying value, such as the simple leaving certificate for Secondary Level I or the enhanced leaving certificate which permits entrance to the Oberstufe of the *Gymnasium*. What these reports did not do was describe the level of learning achieved. Pupils leaving school at the end of Secondary Level I ended their language courses at the page just reached in the textbook. It was not until a few years ago – following failed earlier attempts in the 1970s – that the schools committee of the Standing Conference of Education Ministers closed this gap with a uniform description of the level to be attained at the end of Secondary Level I (grade 10) for German, mathematics and foreign languages. It provides an orientation for the guidelines in all the *Länder*.

To recap: foreign language skills today have attained the quality of a cultural technique. If foreign language skills are lacking or inadequate, an individual will lose out in the competition for higher-level jobs. So everyone needs to learn foreign languages; no-one can be allowed to avoid them. But, at the same time, no-one should be disadvantaged through non-objective assessment criteria and one-sided weighting of errors. Consideration should also be given to the relationship with other fields of learning and subjects at school, given how important foreign languages are in the life of the individual when it comes to making the most of opportunities, and this could, for example, be reflected in the presentation of an individual foreign language profile in the school-leaving certificate. Here, the Council of Europe has proposed the "Foreign Language Portfolio". Insightful and objective criteria would also help to create the necessary transparency in the assessment of foreign language performance and would enable outsiders to understand the grading. More than in the past, foreign language teaching in Germany needs to become oriented to the European dimension. This also means that grading in foreign languages must be transparent and understandable.

All these aspects are linked: correction and assessment are related to motivation, encouragement, and the desire to learn. Multilingualism depends on the desire to learn and a positive attitude to learning foreign languages, which itself is stimulated by objective and motivational assessment of the linguistic performance of the pupils. In a system in which grades and certificates have such an effect on whether opportunities are utilised and entitlements awarded, assessment itself is a vital aspect. But motivation and the desire to learn must not be destroyed by non-objective assessment.

In conclusion

It has not been possible to present all the aspects of foreign language teaching in Germany. Firstly, it would have taken too long, and, secondly, it would only have confused. So this paper has restricted itself to key areas and to interrelationships between arguments: why are things as they are? Also, the paper has attempted to link the presentation of the current situation with criticisms and thoughts about further developments. Some of the points may have been over-critical. But no system is so good that it cannot be improved, so there is always a need for a critical stance. Overall, however, the conclusion is: notwithstanding its deficiencies, inconsistencies and discrepancies, foreign language teaching in Germany works well on the whole and, against the background of a long and very specific tradition, results in amazingly high skills at all levels, which are repeatedly recognised by native speakers. There is much that needs to be developed further, some things should be rejected, others retained. But, overall, it is an efficient system which is substantially better than its sometimes apparently rather tarnished reputation.

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